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APRIL 29, 1978 ONE DOLLAR

Saturday Review

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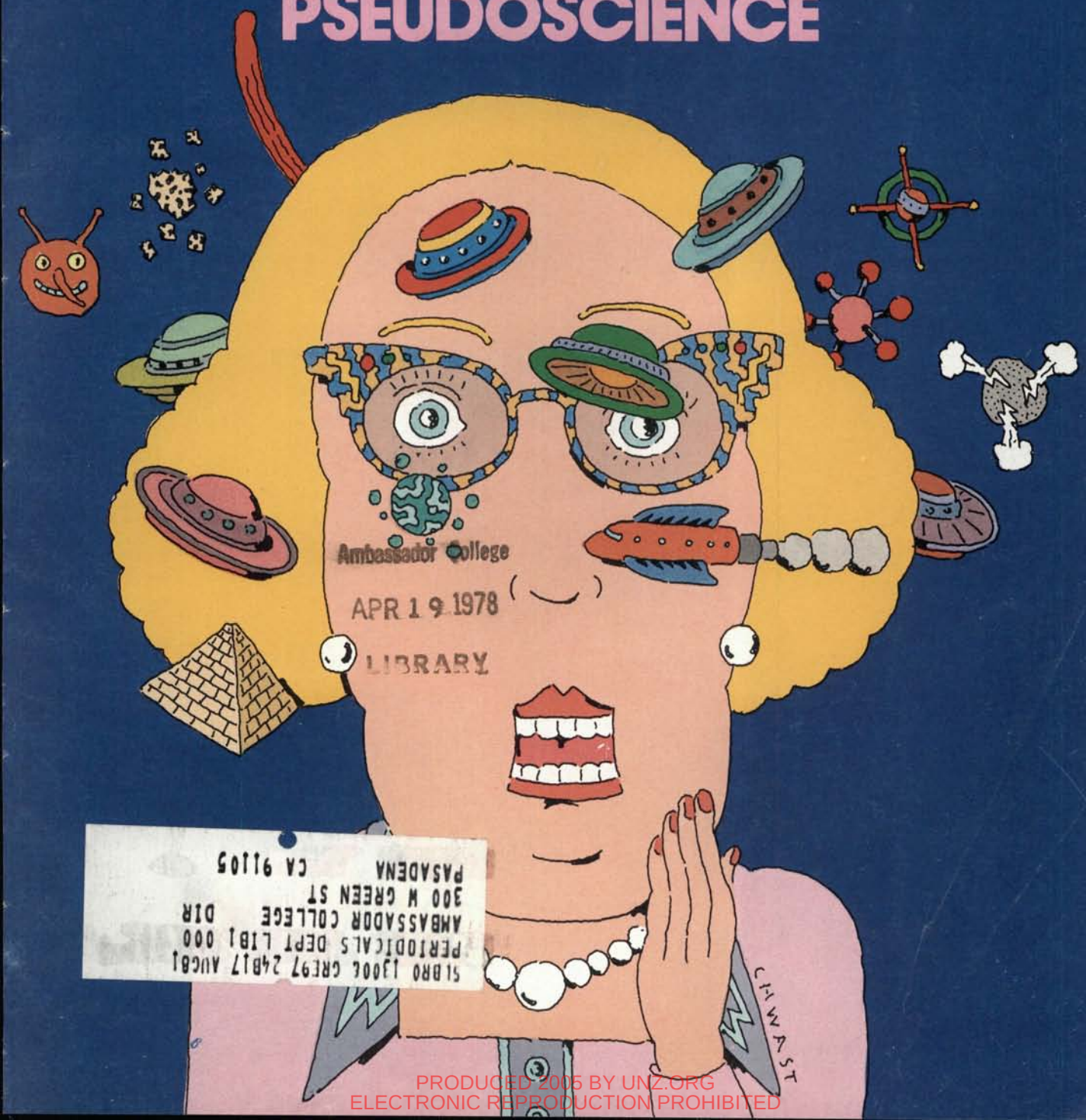

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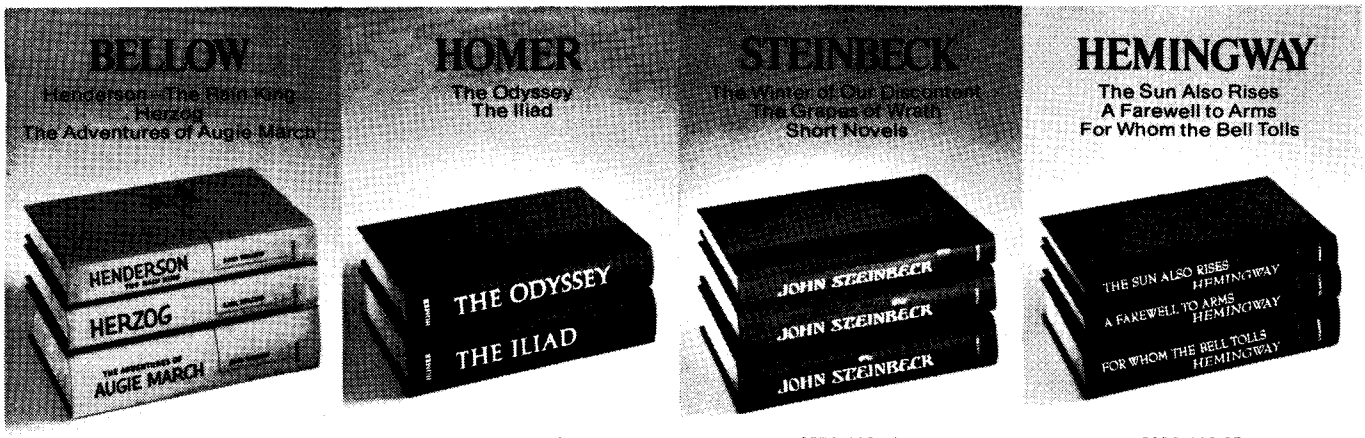

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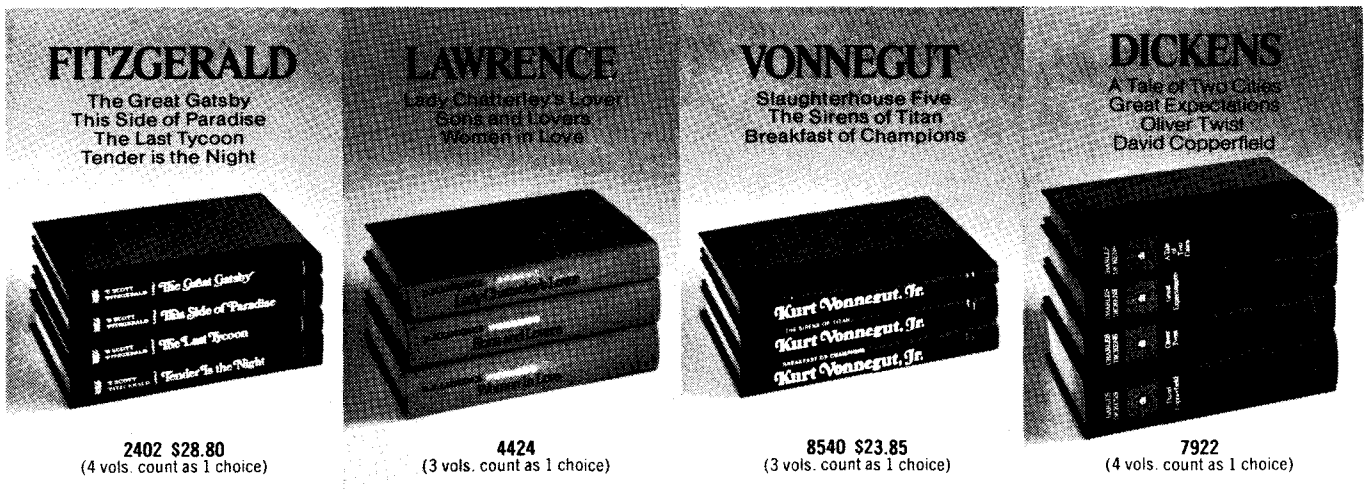

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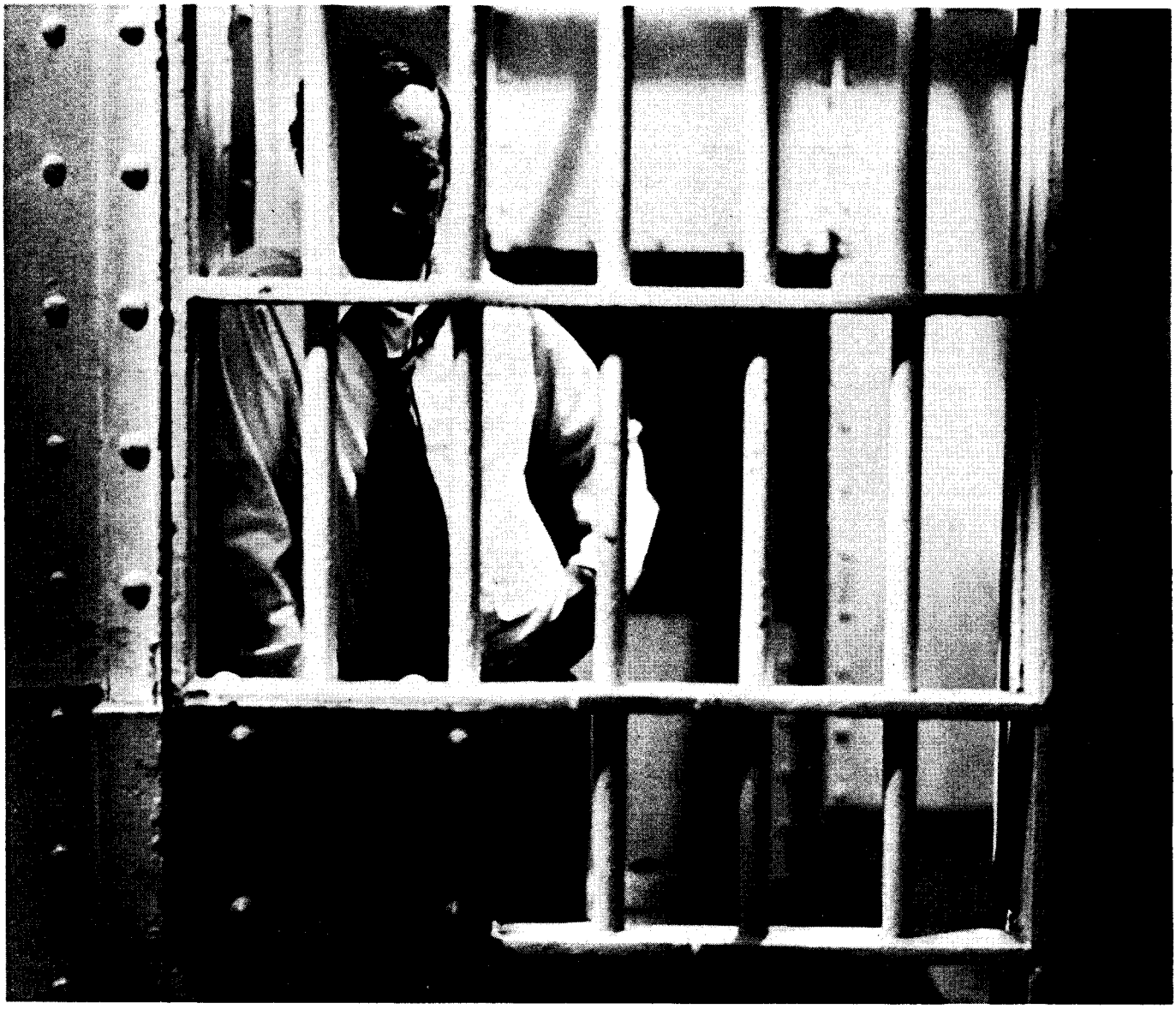

Is putting drunk drivers behind bars the only way to teach them a lesson?

There are many ways to punish drunk drivers.

Jail them, fine them, suspend their licenses, or sometimes all three.

One of these, says the California Department of Motor Vehicles, appears to have a particularly strong educational effect.

The department recently studied a group of drivers with multiple drunk driving convictions who received various combinations of punishments. Drivers who lost their licenses in addition to fines or jail had better records when they got their licenses back. Over six years, they had 40% fewer reckless driving convictions, fewer crashes and fewer moving violations than drivers who kept their licenses.

The agency doesn't see suspension as a panacea. But for the moment, it seems the best lesson for drinkers should include license suspension.

A lot of people think there's nothing much to be done about the problem of drunk driving. But that's no reason to stop trying. We'd like to know what you think. Just write The Travelers Office of Consumer Information, One Tower Square, Hartford, Connecticut 06115. Or dial, toll-free, weekdays from 9 to 5 Eastern Time, 800-243-0191. In Connecticut, call collect, 277-6565.

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CONTENTS

April 29, 1978

Saturday Review

4 **Letters**
6 **Front Runners**

Issues

10 **Our Most Ineffectual Postwar President** by Tad Szulc
After sweeping into office on a high tide of hope and goodwill, President Carter has become strangely irresolute and becalmed. Does he have some game plan, some glowing vision of America's future, that can get us off dead center? Slowly the suspicion grows that there never was, nor is there now, an inspiring blueprint for action—just a Mr. Nice Guy President trying to keep his head above water.

Currents

16 **A Consumer's Guide to Pseudoscience** by James S. Trefil
How to distinguish mere razzle-dazzle from sound scientific speculation? Separating the wheat from the phony baloney is not all that difficult, actually, given a willingness to play devil's advocate.

The Arts

22 **Music to My Ears** by Irving Kolodin *Denver's "surround" concert hall: Is it a good idea?*
24 **The Movies** by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. *The worst years of our lives*
25 **Popular Music** by Stephen Demorest *"White noise" hangovers*
26 **Theater** by Martin Gottfried *Campbell's soup plays*

Books

31 **Kalki** by Gore Vidal Reviewed by John Simon
33 **An American Romance** by John Casey Reviewed by Joe David Bellamy
35 **Two Cheers for Capitalism** by Irving Kristol Reviewed by Webster Schott
37 **The Eye of the Story: Selected Essays and Reviews** by Eudora Welty Reviewed by Carole Cook
39 **Books in Brief**
40 **Fine Print** by Doris Grumbach *Perfect pitch in Albany*
41 **Trade Winds** by William Cole *Ycleptomania (finished)*

Pleasures

42 **Booked for Travel** by Horace Sutton *An island they call Paradise*
45 **Oh, Cuisine!** by Anthony Burgess *A touch of Israel in Rome*

Outlooks

46 **Editorial** by N.C. *Who owns Brazil's jungle?*
48 **Light Refractions** by Thomas H. Middleton *How not to phrase an assignment*
49 **Top of My Head** by Goodman Ace *The new person*
56 **The Back Door** by Carll Tucker *Death on the comeback trail*
22 **Literary Crypt No. 106** 39 **Wit Twister No. 117** 55 **Double-Crostic No. 146**
Cover by Seymour Chwast
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LETTERS

Rah, Rah! Sis-boom... Beethoven?

Irving Kolodin ["Do Prize Competitions Mean Anything?" February 18] seems bothered "that a competition rarely proves anything except how well—or how poorly—a competitor may perform at a specific time in his life." To rectify this, he would like to see the honors shared by several contestants rather than emphasized in one grand-prize winner.

It occurs to me that perhaps Kolodin would enjoy the following proposal: He's heard of team tennis? How about team piano? Individuals could excel, yet the team emphasis would spread the honors. Team piano could be conducted on either the collegiate or the professional level. Each team would be responsible for five pieces or specific movements determined a few weeks before each competition, each team member preparing one piece. At the competition, a member from each of two schools would play the same piece of music before neutral judges, who would score each performance by a point system reflecting many criteria. After five pieces, the team with the highest total would win. The possibilities are many: rivalries between schools, leading scorers, clean-up or anchor pianists, sudden death "play"-offs, second "strings." Imagine the tense crowds when undefeated Indiana faces once-beaten Juilliard!

Fred Blatt
Mansfield, Pa.

Housing: Fair or Foul?

We apparently have a group of people in this country catering to "the poor" ["The Assault on Fortress Suburbia: How Long Can the Poor Be Kept Out?" February 18]. In fact, being poor seems the thing to be.

How many of the poor have scratched for survival, going through college so that they could earn their own way and not have someone do it for them? I did just that, and now I live in the suburbs.

In my subdivision of approximately 50 houses, we have three black families, two Mexican-American families, one Japanese-American family, and one French-American family—all of whom work very hard in the marketplace. Now, the poor are to have homes in my neighborhood in the suburbs for one quarter of what I and these others have paid. That's one of the best buys ever. Where do I sign up?

H. F. Schattenberg
Lansing, Mich.

Not all suburbs are systematically denying housing access to minorities. The Chicago Metropolitan Strategy Group is composed of communities that have recognized the "American Creed" of equality and endeavored to turn "creed" into "deed." The eight communities are presently interracial in character and are trying to maintain diversity in housing demand. Our hopes are that Patricia Harris will get tough with exclusionary areas and that the administration will in general support human rights within our own country.

Bobbie Raymond
Chicago Metropolitan Strategy Group
Chicago, Ill.

As *We* Like It

To be charitable (and it's an effort), I can only assume that Bruce Cook has not read any contemporary science fiction ["From Here to Immortality," February 18]. If he had, he would have realized that "regular readers of science fiction" are quite at home with "curious, devious, almost arcane" books, with or without exasperating literary devices.

Readers—and writers—of science fiction are often accused of having a Bunker mentality. Arrogant assumptions like Cook's are one of the reasons why the accusation is in many cases true.

I would recommend to Cook the works of Stanislaw Lem, Harlan Ellison, and Ursula Le Guin, to name but a few—all recognized as science fiction writers and all curious, devious, and arcane to a degree.

Phoebe W. Ellis
Millwood, Va.

Editor's Note: Tuition at Harvard is $4,450 a year, not $7,000 a semester, as stated in "Whatever Happened to Mr. Chips?" [April 1]. We apologize for the error.

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H H H

Norman Cousins's article ["Journeys with Humphrey," March 4] shed light on a dark place in our history.

The light was needed. Why, one wonders, is Watergate so fixed in the minds of the media? So far as I know, nobody died as a result of the Watergate cover-up. How many died as a result of the cover-ups, deceits, and stubborn wrongheadedness that characterized U.S. policy in the Vietnam War? Forty thousand?

Why was there not and why is there not the dogged energy being spent on uncovering how our government secretly got us into a war it didn't plan to win, how it skirted perilously close to confrontation with our nuclear-armed major enemy, and how it covered all this up with a smokescreen of lies? And this through three presidential administrations? Is Vietnam a rock that nobody dares to turn over because the worms under it may bite?

In how many other areas is our government lying to us or hiding the truth?

Donald A. Justice
Sepulveda, Calif.

Norman Cousins's article on Humphrey is an important document that should set the record straight for the electorate at large and for present and future historians.

The piece clearly shows that our country missed the chance to elect a potentially great president or perhaps have a humanistic secretary of state. It might have avoided a period of great trauma as well.

Henry S. Evans
Morristown, N.J.

On December 4, 1968, I received a letter from Hubert Humphrey, who was then Vice-President. The second paragraph is really the quintessential HHH. I would like to share it with *SR* and its readers:

> Defeat, like victory, is only a passing phenomenon in a political career. The battle for one's ideals and beliefs must go on, and I mean to pursue mine.

Herbert Gurbst
Kingston, Pa.

Mysteriouser and Mysteriouser

Jon Swan's reporting on the remarkable sleuthing of Lotte Brand Philip in the Ghent Altarpiece whodunit [March 4] is informative and tends to be convincing, especially since Swan confesses to a degree of bewilderment after having observed the masterpiece. However, there are a couple of points that, while possibly having trivial explanations, require clarification before the Philip thesis can become fully acceptable.

The most worrisome point is that the dimensions of the end panels are such that on folding (to close the altarpiece), the central panel is precisely covered. If the original work was rigidly installed between the verticals of a sculptured Gothic framework, as Philip claims, it is most improbable that any specific intention to ensure that the combined width of the wings was equal to the center panel would have existed. Obviously, a limited discrepancy in original panel widths could have been accommodated by adjusting the width of the frames presently enclosing the individual panels, which if done should be easily discernible.

Also, there seems to be present a fourth level of reality, since the outer panels of the lower portion appear to depict a Near Eastern landscape peopled by exotic (biblical?) figures on one side, while the other side seems to be a fifteenth-century Netherlands scene. Is there a coming together at the Lamb?

Thanks for this article, and please, let's have more of this kind.

William Vidaver
West Vancouver, B.C.

Letter to Goody

Man and boy, for over 40 years I've been listening to and reading words and phrases made by Goodman Ace. His letter to Groucho ["Personal," February 18] and his column about Jane Ace ["Jane," February 8, 1975] prompt me to finally say how much admiration I have for the man.

From *Easy Aces* to public radio to *SR*, and all the others in between, I have yet to be bored or not entertained by this most talented individual. To me, he is a true comedy genius, and I want to salute him. His last word in the "Groucho" column is one I'll borrow to say to Goody: Thanks for the years of pure pleasure and "Seeya."

William B. Gordon
San Diego, Calif.

Yankee Go Home

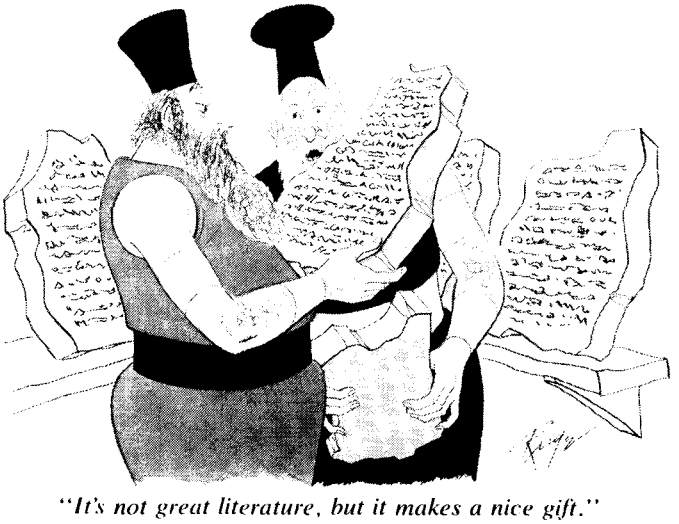
To one who knows a little of India, James Traub's article ["Down and Out in Dharamsala," March 18] is disappointing. He would have done better for himself and for India too if he had never gone there.

He makes strange statements: "Why have the Sixties-in-exile taken up headquarters in old Cathay?" "Old Cathay" used to mean China. I've never seen it anywhere applied to India.

And how anyone can call India dull, even transcendentally so, is beyond comprehension. The Gangetic Plains, "flat and dead to the horizon," are not all of India. There are mountains aplenty, in the south, where the Western Gats rise to 8,000 feet within 50 miles of the Arabian Sea, as well as in the north. And the people—a woman from a plains village bringing home two pots of water on her head; the beggars in the cities; the barber squatting on the sidewalk and with a straight razor shaving his squatting customer.

To us, India is beautiful and fascinating, a country with many problems yet full of wisdom. The year Traub spent there was evidently not enough to get the real flavor of so great country.

The Reverend Warren Waldo
N. Ferrisburgh, Vt.



"It's not great literature, but it makes a nice gift."

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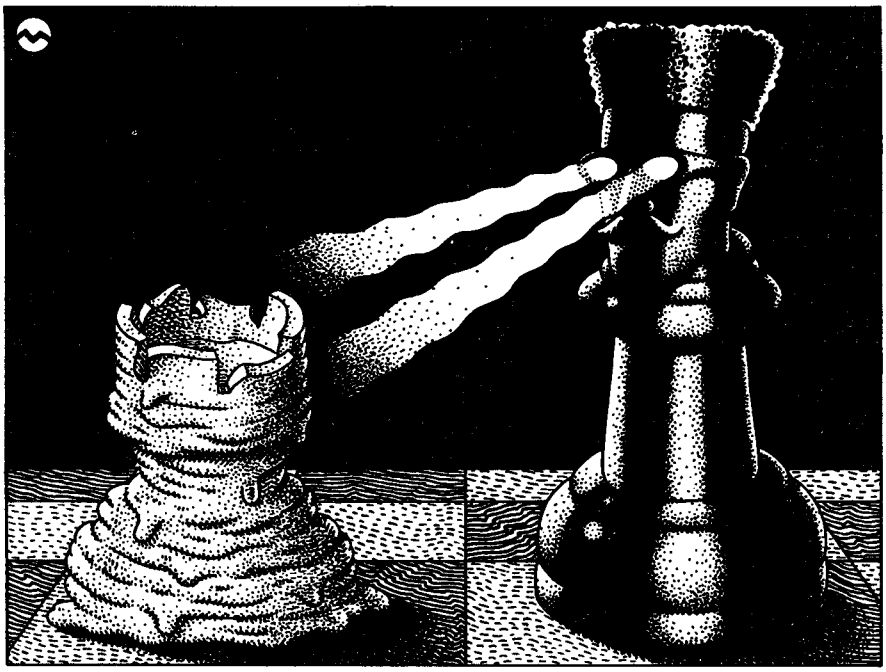

Marvin Mattelson

The Evil Eye

Do Russian chess champions play dirty pool? Indeed they do, says Soviet defector Viktor Korchnoi, himself an international grand master. When he was pitted against Soviet superplayer Boris Spassky at Belgrade, Korchnoi says, he was bombarded with hypnotic waves, emanating either from the gallery or from Spassky himself. Korchnoi claims this is why Spassky showed up wearing—at different times during the long match—sunglasses, a sunshade, and underwater goggles. Spassky, for his part, claims he wore the eye gear to protect himself from the unsettling effects of Korchnoi's baleful, intimidating glare.

Korchnoi also believes Soviet secret police aimed "death rays" at him. Since big-time chess requires above all a mind free of distractions, Korchnoi's allegations—and Spassky's counter—are serious charges. But whoever was psyching out whom, Korchnoi did beat Spassky at Belgrade and will meet Soviet world champion Anatoly Karpov later on this year.

Problems, Problems...

An Islamic group funded by Saudi Arabians is encountering complications in its attempt to set up a youth camp in Ohio. In 1967, the Saudi-backed Federation of Islamic Associations paid $10,000 for a 138-acre site in Chester Hills and got ready to build the camp. Then the complications began. First, oil was discovered on the property. Later, the federation found that a seam of solid coal runs under the land. Finally, someone found the property is sitting on a huge reservoir of natural gas—for the rights to which a company has now offered the federation $2 million.

Which way to go—oil, coal, or gas? Since the Saudis are used to dealing only with the problems of a one-crop economy—oil extraction—the Chester Hills situation must be a dizzying, and delicious, new problem for them. Arnold Shaheen, chairman of the federation's planning group, says the whole matter is still up in the air, but he adds pointedly, "Certain [of the] offers have been spiked with benefits difficult to refuse." No word, meanwhile, on how the camp's youthful would-be patrons feel about all this.

Africa's Underrated Leaders

Are Idi Amin and the egregious Emperor Bokassa I your idea of typical black African heads of state? Well, think again, says Father Hubert Horan, writing in the journal *Missionaries of Africa Report*.

"The way we dismiss or downgrade African leaders," Father Hubert writes, "is terribly unfair.... We don't see too much in the press, for example, about [Senegal's] Léopold Senghor... an accomplished poet in French, internationally known as a man of letters.... Julius Nyerere of Tanzania is an author of ideas as well as books, and he, with Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda, is a proponent of a humanism such as Plato longed to put into practice."

As for rumored corruption and ineptitude among black African leaders, the clergyman cites "the unspeakable corruption of our [own] first centennial, with Boss Tweed of New York, and the Grant administration. Did we, after a century of independence, produce a Chief of State capable of stepping down gracefully with a gently ironic quotation from Shakespeare on his lips, as did Nigeria's General Gowon?"

Father Hubert, obviously a gentle man, refrains from mentioning that when—after two centuries of American independence—Richard Nixon stepped down, he did so in a way that was less than graceful and by no means Shakespearean.

The Translator as Traitor

An American living in France tells us that in Sam Peckinpah's war film *Cross of Iron*, shown recently in Paris with French subtitles, a German soldier peers out of his bunker, spots an oncoming Russian armored column, and shouts, "Tanks!" The subtitle reads, "Merci!"

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FRONT RUNNERS

Update

You may recall the editorial page comments on Michael Herbert Dengler's petition to have his name legally changed to four digits—1069 (*SR*, January 21).

On February 13, Minneapolis district court judge Donald T. Barbeau turned down Dengler's request, denying the trend toward faceless numbers the judicial stamp of approval. He quoted Iago's declaration to Othello: "Who steals my purse steals trash ... he that filches from me my good name ... makes me poor indeed." He quoted also from *SR*'s editorial: "In the best of all possible worlds, there might be no harm in allowing Michael Herbert Dengler to be known by a number. But in a world overrun by bureaucrats, replacing even a single human name with a number is like throwing raw meat to lions or a hanging curve to Reggie Jackson." Finally, Judge Barbeau cited the words of a World War II concentration camp prisoner, whose forearm carries a numbered identification: "They did not live nor did they die according to the laws of this world. Their name was 'Number ... Katzetnik.'"

Judge Barbeau reported that in his 18 years on the bench, he had never before been so deluged with free advice, representing strong and compelling positions on both sides of the question. He decided that the court should not impose numbers as matter of law upon society at large. For Mr. Dengler, 1069 can be a nickname, but the registrar for his voting district will not need to order a numerical index.

Checking In

Alarmed over America's infatuation with statistics and computer data, AP newsman Sid Moody cites the New Hampshire hospital nurse who recently asked the father of a just-born baby to give her the baby's social security number. When the father protested that his baby hadn't even been named yet, the nurse replied starchily, "We don't need the name, just the number."

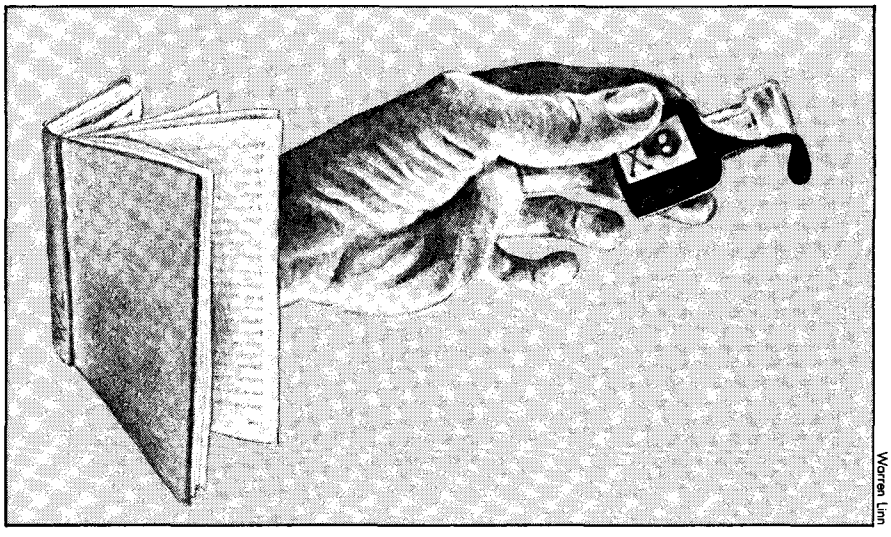
The Man from Muck

The war against polluters has produced its first lone raider—a mysterious Chicago-area figure who strikes at night and is known as The Fox. According to *Chicago Tribune* columnist Jack Mabley, who is in touch with him, The Fox is a pollution hater who takes delight in scooping up pollution guck and letting fly with it at the companies that produce it. Thus, he "once dumped a bucket of United States Steel sludge on the plush carpets of the [company's] corporate offices."

More recently, the raider scored the front walls and windows of the McWhorter Chemicals Company with "buckets of a thick resinous muck" that Mabley says the company had earlier pumped into the Fox River. "It was ... gooey stuff, kind of like wax," Mabley quotes The Fox as saying. "It just destroys the river. I think it will be very hard to get off the building."

Once the muck stains were expunged, the company had the problem of purging from its memory banks these lines of doggerel, scribbled on cardboard and left behind at the scene by The Fox:

Ye company called McWhorter
Do you play dirty? Well, sorta.
What you've dumped in our stream
    is most rotten, low, mean,
So we're dumping it back
    like we orter.



Warren Linn

Mixed Blessings

Agatha Christie giveth, and Agatha Christie taketh away: Recently, thrillers written by the late queen of the whodunits have snuffed out one life but saved another.

In Creances, France, Roland Roussel has confessed to lacing his uncle's red wine with atropine, a poison that Roussel learned about from reading Christie's *The Tuesday Club Murders*. Given the deadly wine bottle by Roussel as a gift, the uncle, eighty-year-old Maxime Masseron, opened it on Christmas eve and raised a seasonal toast with his wife and two men friends. Masseron expired on the spot, and his wife and the two guests went to the hospital seriously ill.

At Hammersmith Hospital in London, months earlier, a nineteen-month-old Arab girl, flown to England from the Middle East, had lain dying from a mysterious affliction while doctors looked on, helpless. Enter nurse Marsha Maitland, who recalled that in Christie's *The Pale Horse* someone was stricken with thallium poisoning and that the victim's symptoms were like the baby's. Maitland's hunch was later confirmed, and the baby, given treatment, recovered completely.

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NATO: The Uncoordinated Giant

Most of us go to sleep at night secure in the belief that NATO—our multinational shield—will protect the free world from whatever military threat may befall. NATO's strength is grounded, the presumption goes, in the fact that if war comes, the different national components will act as one great allied force, freely exchanging their uniformly trained personnel and their standardized weapons in response to local situations of stress.

Unfortunately, this vision of NATO as a mighty chorus of nations singing in one key is—to put it mildly—out of sync with the realities. The truth is that in many ways NATO is a sprawling, uncoordinated giant that can hardly whistle and tie its shoes at the same time. As every NATO commander knows, the organization not only lacks standardization and "interoperability" between many of its prize weapons systems but is even likely in a real-life fire fight to end up with its own component forces shooting at each other.

Take the case last year of a NATO exercise in Europe which showed that 44 Allied pilots had been "shot down" by the camera guns of "other" aircraft. But it turned out that the "other" aircraft claiming these 44 "kills" were not U.S. F-5s playing the role of Soviet MiGs. Instead, the losers had been shot down by planes *playing the role* of NATO "friendlies"—this bollix-up happening because different NATO nations operate their IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) on different frequencies. If a radar-control plane spots an aircraft blip on one of its screens and it does not emit a recognizably "friendly" squawk, the controller aboard will naturally order one of his planes to attack it. And attack they had!

When NATO began, operating as it did with Uncle Sam's charity and mostly U.S. equipment, standardization was almost as good as it has always been among the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, where virtually all the weapons are Soviet-designed. But America's allies now have highly developed, competing arms industries, notably in aerospace. The result is an immense profusion of different designs of weaponry.

NATO operates 39 models of 23 different "families" of tactical aircraft alone. Different air forces use different ordnance, different fuel nozzles, different auxiliary power units to start engines. Most such items could, of course, be standardized at the planning stage, even with different aircraft. The 2nd Allied Tactical Air Force (ATAF), comprising Belgian, British, Dutch, and German units, has eleven types of combat aircraft with different combat radiuses and five different missions, armed with five types of ammunition, six types of napalm containers, sixteen different models of auxiliary fuel tanks. The 2nd ATAF's communications are not completely compatible with those of the 4th ATAF, which includes U.S., Canadian, and German wings. These problems will be only partially solved by the widespread introduction of the American F-16 fighter and the Anglo-Italo-German Tornado MRCA (multirole combat aircraft).

NATO has over 100 different tactical missiles and 7 main battle tanks; the introduction of the still developmental Chrysler XM-1 and the German-made Leopard tank will help because by the 1980s both will use the German 120mm. gun. There are 8 types of armored personnel carriers, 20 different antitank missiles, 31 different antitank weapons in all—with 18 more under development. The "integrated" seven-nation Allied Mobile Force uses 7 types of tactical aircraft, 6 different recoilless rifles, 4 types of wire-guided antitank projectiles, 3 different types of mortars, machine guns, and rifles, 50 different kinds of ammunition. Even feeding the warriors might pose a problem: If U.S. planes dropped the big American ration packs to a surrounded force of Allied troops, the Canadians would find them too large for their field ovens, while the Germans have no field ovens at all.

Experts say that all this nonstandardization doubles deployment time and costs NATO about $15 billion yearly that could be spent instead on additional weapons and equipment. The research and development subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee estimates that "NATO loses 30 to 40 percent of its effectiveness because of inadequate standardization."

One problem is that replacement schedules for different nations do not coincide. If an important technological advance were to be scored by one member, standardization would mean either that others would have to make some of their systems obsolete ahead of time or that the inventor nation would have to delay introducing the advance into its own inventory until the others were ready.

NATO Secretary General Joseph Luns calls the situation a "nightmare."

There is some progress toward commonality. The U.S. Army now has an International Rationalization Office. The Air Force has a similar unit. NATO's Task Force No. 8 is tackling the problem. The Senate Armed Services Committee has proposed setting up an "Office of Standardization" at the Pentagon.

The U.S. Navy and Raytheon—respectively, the investor in and the manufacturer of the AIM-9L Sidewinder air-to-air missile—waived license fees and the recoupment of research-and-development costs to persuade Germany, Britain, and Norway to coproduce the weapon. A similar arrangement will enable Germany to coproduce the USAF's forward-looking infrared (FLIR) sensor, while a controversial radar control plane is being offered to Allied air forces for a price that includes only a four percent recoupment of research-and-development outlays. But there is still a long way to go.

Some experts believe nonstandardization may have some benefits. Unlike NATO, the Warsaw Treaty Organization forces have to learn to counter a huge host of systems. Shooting down MiGs, Sukhois, and Tupolevs, they say, is less difficult than learning to shoot down dozens of different Western aerospace brand names. Always providing, that is, that the Soviet Air Force gets to shoot at them before they are hit by "friendly fire."

—RUSSELL WARREN HOWE

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OUR MOST INEFFECTUAL POSTWAR PRESIDENT

by Tad Szulc

"THE GOVERNMENT," Jimmy Carter told Congress in his State of the Union Message last January 19, "can't set our goals; it cannot define our vision." Carter clearly did not intend it that way, but—ironically—the statement summed up the overwhelming problem of his presidency: a lack of leadership that is turning him into our most ineffectual postwar President.

It is both sad and rather surprising that it should be so. Jimmy Carter was elected to the White House on the promise of an "open administration" attuned to the people's needs and aspirations. His election was a reaction against the Nixon years (Gerald Ford having failed to instill a spirit of real change), and as the President put it in his State of the Union address, he wanted a "true partnership between government and the people."

What, then, has gone wrong in such a short time? How did Jimmy Carter, unquestionably a highly intelligent, motivated, and sensitive man, squander away the goodwill with which he came into office? Why is his natural constituency—the liberals, intellectuals, blue-collar workers, farmers, Jews, and blacks, who form the basis of his dream to refashion a Rooseveltian coalition—so disenchanted with him while the business community—which has not developed the slightest confidence in his administration — now fears a recession and wage and price controls?

Further, why is this Democratic President unable to win support from a heavily Democratic Congress to the point where the two branches of government have lost rapport, finding themselves in virtual legislative paralysis?

And given the professional caliber of the men and women Carter has brought together, why is American foreign policy going so awry, with the United States now at serious odds with such traditional allies as Israel, West Germany, and Japan? Why is Carter's international image so unconvincing and, in fact, worsening with every foreign trip he makes?

The best available answer, with Carter now well into his second year, is that he suffers from an ever-deepening crisis of domestic and international trust, a crisis caused, in turn, as much by his own attitudes—political contradictions and inconsistencies—and the image projected by his family and personal friends as by the fact that, demonstrably, his long-range policies are not working in most areas. His Cabinet is strangely ineffectual and so is his White House staff.

Distrust of Carter is most visible in Congress. Senator Henry M. Jackson, of Washington, one of the most powerful and outspoken Democrats on foreign policy and energy issues, said openly in mid-March that the President has had "rough sledding" and needs help. He described Carter's advisers as "sycophants" and said that the President was afflicted by "abulia" (an abnormal inability to act or to make decisions).

Senator George S. McGovern, of South Dakota, the leading Senate liberal, keeps complaining that Carter, despite his campaign promises, has turned his back on America's needy. Congressman William Cohen, a Republican from Maine who has supported Carter on many liberal issues (and who is running this year for a Democratic-held Senate seat), said in a recent interview, "The basic reason that many in Congress are disenchanted with the Carter administration is that there has been such a great disparity between what was professed and what has been practiced."

The public reaction, as expressed by a Gallup poll taken early in February, showed a 51 percent approval of Carter's early handling of his job. For a comparable period in office, Eisenhower had a 68 percent approval; Kennedy, 78 percent; Johnson, 69 percent; and Nixon, 56 percent.

The President's only major tangible foreign policy triumph—and, for that matter, legislative victory—was the Senate's ratification in mid-March of the treaty providing for the neutrality of the Panama Canal after the year 2000, when the United States is to relinquish jurisdiction over the Canal zone. The treaty was approved with a single vote to spare

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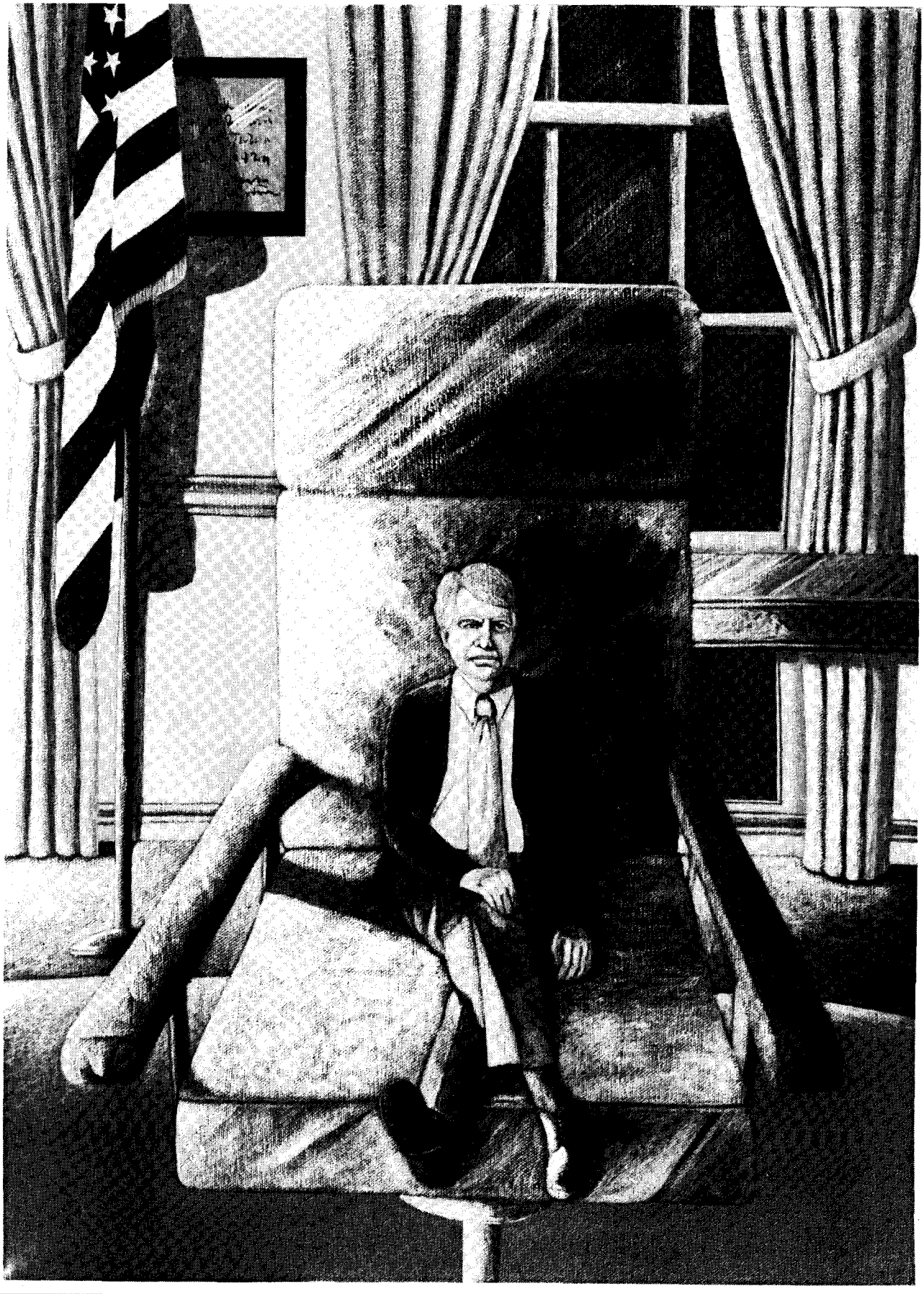

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over the required two-thirds majority—it was 68 to 32, with uncertainty over the outcome lasting until the final day. Decisive votes were cast by senators who had concluded along with the White House that rejection of the treaty would totally undermine the presidency in the conduct of foreign affairs in general.

The companion treaty, actually turning over the Canal to Panama in the year 2000, was to go to the Senate in late April; Carter was confident that under the circumstances it too would be ratified. No such confidence exists, however, in the ratification of a new Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement (SALT) with the Soviet Union—even assuming that one will be signed in 1978. SALT is unpopular in the Senate, and in this election year, Carter's foreign policy credit on Capitol Hill was exhausted with the Panama votes.

The striking thing about the problem is that Jimmy Carter has not been guilty of any serious offense—any identifiable Nixon-type act or any catastrophic error. The 110-day coal strike was the only major crisis during his first 15 months in the Oval Office, and though it was finally settled, there was controversy whether the President should not have intervened before the situation became critical.

What is more, the United States is at peace with the world, and the President has no Bay of Pigs or Vietnam to worry about. By objective standards, the economy has not fared badly during Carter's first year or so: Unemployment has diminished (though not as much so for blacks), and inflation has been kept fairly well in check (though it has begun to rise most dangerously this year).

The fact that the stock market was at a three-year low after a year of the new presidency was more a reflection of general unease with the Carter administration—an indefinable and elusive factor that nevertheless may soon lead to trouble—than it was of underlying economic conditions.

The depreciation of the dollar (it fell 21 percent against the Swiss franc between August 1977 and March 1978) has, of course, increased domestic inflation. Like the stock market slump, this depreciation also appears to result less from basic economic incapacity than from international distrust of the Carter administration: Clearly, our petroleum-linked trade deficits are not the only reason for the dollar's drop. Announced in mid-March, a much-touted new accord with West Germany to use the powerful mark to support the dollar failed to arrest the slide. World currency dealers simply continued to distrust the United States. And with the dollar writhing on the floor, the value of gold has been soaring: It is mistrust of the greenback that has made gold hoarders crawl out of the woodwork. By the same token, foreign oil producers are no longer sure they want to accept dollars for their oil.

Interestingly, Jimmy Carter is not disliked as a man by a vast majority of Americans, although according to the latest polls, his popularity and effectiveness ratings had dropped sharply by late February. Americans neither love him nor hate him, which is one measure of the absence of his impact on the country (Ford had the same problem, but he was not an elected president). As a matter of fact, *The Wall Street Journal* discovered that many of those who chose Carter over Ford in 1976 would do so today, his lackluster performance notwithstanding. People still say that his instincts are right—but obviously this is not enough.

In fundamentals, we know almost as little about our President as we did when we elected him. To be sure, Carter is highly visible: Between his inauguration and March 9 of this year, he held 27 televised news conferences, an unusually high rate of media exposure. Then there were fireside chats on energy and on the Panama Canal treaties, a long year-end interview with the TV networks, meetings with magazine editors, college editors, and broadcasters. There have been well-covered trips around the country and overnight visits with an "average American family" in this or that town.

Some critics argue that Carter operates through symbolism (not even style) rather than through substance. Americans remember his walk down Pennsylvania Avenue, from Capitol Hill to the White House on Inauguration Day, and that he wore a cardigan while delivering the fireside energy chat. But few remember what he actually said in his inaugural or in the energy talk. There have been virtually no memorable thoughts, no memorable lines that future generations might quote.

The image we have of Jimmy Carter is of the unfailing politeness, the tight-lipped smile (the blue eyes rarely smile, they remain hard and cold), the soft voice, the permanent self-control. (During the campaign, the Carter smile was toothy, not tight-lipped; it was his personality symbol and an asset. It no longer seems to be.) There is no human projection in the sense of Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, or even Nixon (who at least could be angry, nasty, petulant, self-serving, or cloying). What comes across, over television or in personal contact, is the aloofness and sometimes a touch of self-righteousness. A woman who often visits the White House remarked not long ago, "You know, it's a bit eerie. Carter says all the right things, goes through all the motions, seems at ease with the pomp and the pageantry of the presidency, but, damn it, you just don't have the feeling that this man *is* the President of the United States. That special extra dimension is somehow missing."

Much of this image may stem from the fact that Jimmy Carter is a very private person who chooses not to be excessively communicative outside the small circle of his Georgia helpers and friends—Hamilton Jordan, who is the de facto White House chief of staff; Press Secretary Jody Powell; Bert Lance, no longer head of the Office of Management and Budget but still close to the President; and Atlanta attorney Charles Kirbo. In a way, the Georgia "mafia" are to Carter what Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Ziegler were to Nixon: men with whom he feels at home. Kennedy, to be sure, had his Massachusetts "mafia," and Johnson had his Texans; but both reached out for human contact in all directions, by phone or personally.

Carter, like Nixon, prefers maximal privacy. He deals chiefly with his senior staff—National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski sees the President every morning and sometimes more often—but by and large he tends to shun outside visitors. Among the resentments against him on Capitol Hill is that he does not meet with the congressional leadership often enough (though lately he has made an effort to improve this state of affairs). As a result, his policies are often unclear to senators and congressmen. Vice-President Mondale has easy access to the Oval Office, and he is highly involved in Carter's domestic and international initia-

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Unexpectedly, Carter's 'open administration' seems to be distressingly thin-skinned. Criticism is not gladly accepted, and something akin to an 'it's them against us' atmosphere toward the press is emerging."

tives. It is a constructive relationship, but no visible personal closeness has developed between the two men. Whenever possible, Carter's approach is to read staff memoranda rather than to be briefed orally. This, of course, is a question of the working style that suits him best, but the impression grows around the White House that the President is increasingly isolating himself.

Having run for the presidency as a Washington "outsider," Carter still remains that—by choice. The Carters occasionally attend the theater or concerts, but the President and his immediate entourage basically want no part of the city's "establishment." As if through deliberate arrogance, their playtime is with each other. A famous Georgetown hostess was shocked recently when upon inviting a ranking White House staffer to dinner, she was asked to provide a guest list in advance. This is not done in Washington—except in the case of the President's coming to dinner.

Carter started out by emphasizing the central role of the Cabinet, but this emphasis soon evaporated. With the exceptions of Defense Secretary Harold Brown, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, and Central Intelligence Agency director Stansfield Turner, key advisers (except for White House staffers) do not enjoy permanent access to the Oval Office.

At the same time, the White House is acting with excessive defensiveness about Carter, his top staff, and his administration's policies in general. The Carter White House has certainly not reached the stage of the Nixon White House "bunker" mentality, but exchanges between Powell and newsmen are growing testy and unpleasant. Reporters have been called on the carpet by Powell in a manner that even Ziegler seldom employed in "correcting" news stories. Unexpectedly, Carter's "open administration" seems to be as distressingly thin-skinned as was the Republican regime's. Criticism is not gladly accepted, and something akin to an "it's them against us" atmosphere toward the press is emerging again at the White House. Most curiously, this nascent conflict involves the so-called liberal writers more than it does the conservatives: In a broader sense, the liberal establishment is more vocally critical of the Carter administration than that of the conservatives, presumably because their early high expectations for the new President have yet to be met. (It has almost been overlooked that the President did, in effect, grant an amnesty to Vietnam War draft evaders and together with the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence laid the groundwork for a sensible reorganization of the U.S. intelligence community.)

The end of the honeymoon between the White House and the liberals of the media came with the Bert Lance affair last fall, when Carter resisted pressures to dismiss his banker friend from the Budget post despite Lance's questionable past banking practices. The dismissal of David Marston, a Republican United States attorney in Philadelphia, became another cause célèbre in which the President was caught flat-footed; charges of cover-ups and of old-fashioned political patronage triggered more bitterness in the White House, and as late as the March 9 news conference, Carter was unable to explain why the Justice Department had deleted from Marston's file favorable comments made about the attorney by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. As Congressman Cohen remarked, "The promise to take politics out of the Department of Justice is the most visible inconsistency between words and deeds."

Most astounding of the media episodes, however, was Powell's issuance of a 33-page "white paper" defending the President's chief political adviser, Hamilton Jordan, from accusations in Washington gossip columns that he had spit a mouthful of amaretto and cream at a young woman who allegedly was resisting his advances at a local singles bar. Jordan had been involved earlier in tactless public behavior (including a remark comparing the *poitrine* of the Egyptian ambassador's wife to the pyramids on the Nile), but through Powell's overkill press release, the bar incident was escalated to the level of a national front-page story. Jordan, whose responsibilities have been enlarged to give him a major voice in high-level foreign policy decisions, has become the butt of contemptuous jokes by comedians and TV talk-show hosts in a way that casts an embarrassing pall on a White House that prides itself on seriousness and rectitude. The promotion of "Billy Beer" by the President's brother, Billy Carter, a commercial exploitation of his White House family links, has added little to presidential prestige. This goes, too, for the strange "religious" involvement of the President's sister, Ruth Carter Stapleton, with the hard-porn publisher Larry Flynt (she rushed to his bedside after he was shot) and for the promotion by "Miz Lillian" Carter of her book.

The mystery is that Carter seems unaware of the damage that he suffers from Jordan's and brother Billy's shenanigans. He is, of course, most loyal to friends and relatives, but for a man so conscious of symbolism, he should realize that his White House is seen by the public in terms of these negative symbols. It is bad news when "Ham" Jordan's notoriety distracts Americans from the more weighty issues of the presidency, particularly since Jordan happens to be an extremely intelligent and useful member of the presidential staff.

FROM THE OUTSET, THEN, Carter has misread the mood of the nation. Americans may not wish to live through another imperial presidency, but, like any nation, they do want their leaders to be leaders—to be admirable, to set goals, and indeed to define the country's "vision." Without such leadership, neither the Congress nor the people will be responsive to his initiatives.

Carter has shown his lack of leadership by his lack of preparedness on three issues. He has said that government "must move away from crisis management," but this wish also collided with reality—as the President quickly discovered—when the lengthy coal strike created a national emergency and forced him to invoke the unpopular Taft-Hartley Act. Carter had no such plan when the coal strike erupted last December, but making a virtue of necessity, he later insisted that out of respect for the collective bargaining process, he had stayed out of it until the negotiations broke down late in February.

Carter was also unprepared for President Anwar Sadat's peace initiative in the Middle East—largely the result of the administration's earlier mismanagement of Arab-Israeli diplomacy—and then proceeded to play catch-up ball, claiming credit for what looked at the time like a major breakthrough.

Playing arbiter, Carter got bogged down in a pointless public dispute with Israel's prime minister Menachem Begin over the meaning of United Nations resolutions on a Middle

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"The deepening gulf between Carter and his constituencies renders even more difficult the fulfillment of his objectives and leads to a pervasive paralysis of the national will to move ahead."

East peace. While portraying himself as the champion of peace, the President insisted on selling advanced jet aircraft to Saudi Arabia and Egypt as well as to Israel during the most delicate period in the negotiations earlier this year. This served to embroil the White House in an unpleasant controversy with the Jewish-American community, in which both sides succeeded in looking as bad as possible. When Israel occupied a strip of Lebanese territory to neutralize Palestinian terrorists who on March 11 killed scores of Israeli civilians, the Carter administration—which had been arguing for the return of Arab territories taken in 1967—proposed installing the U.N. peacekeeping buffer force in the area instead of the Israeli occupying forces.

The administration was also surprised by the magnitude of the Soviet-Cuban engagement in Ethiopia's war with Somalia, although there had been warning signals for nearly a year for anyone to see. In this context, Carter and Brzezinski displayed their frustrations in and their penchant for hard-line foreign policy. Against the advice of Vance, they announced that Soviet behavior in the Horn of Africa might affect the current negotiations for a new SALT agreement. Vance's view, generally shared by the foreign policy community in Washington, was that the Horn and SALT were not comparable issues in America's security priorities. With the quickening nuclear arms race, Vance feels that a SALT II agreement is vital to the United States.

Similarly, the administration ignored for six months the steady depreciation of the dollar despite dire warnings from all quarters. Such spokesmen as Treasury Secretary W. Michael Blumenthal publicly discounted serious dangers to the dollar, leading speculators worldwide to believe that the United States would not intervene on the markets to protect the value of its currency. Only in January, when the situation had gotten out of hand, did the administration attempt to bolster the dollar, but even those efforts were halfhearted, with the result that by March the greenback had plunged to an all-time low. Carter's reaction to *that* was to recite homilies about economic "principles," which, he said, the world was not assessing properly—and the dollar kept sliding. The policy decision was to push West Germany and Japan to stimulate *their* economies so that they could buy more from the United States and thereby strengthen the dollar. All this only served to damage relations with Bonn and Tokyo.

Disturbing to the country at large is its continued inability to understand or to define domestically and internationally Carter's philosophy. This relates directly to the Congress's and the public's lack of confidence in the man from Georgia.

He *sounds* liberal (or populist) when, for example, he denounces the oil companies' excessive profits or when he engages in platitudinous rhetoric about the plight of our cities or of human rights abroad. But he *acts* like a conservative in terms of the budget and other economic policies. In the end, neither liberals nor conservatives trust him.

Proposing a $25-billion tax cut in the next fiscal year (beginning in October, just before the midterm elections), the President left both the poor and the rich dissatisfied. The poor concluded that the cut would not compensate for inflation and for steeply increased social security taxes (one of the few major pieces of legislation Carter managed to get through the Congress in 1977; but even House speaker Tip O'Neill wants to revise the law downward in 1978). The rich—notably, corporate managers—felt the proposed tax cut was inadequate to stimulate the economy. They were already worried about the sharp drop in automotive sales since this past December.

Rather pointlessly, the President urged the Congress to ban tax deductions for businessmen's "three-martini lunches" (the populist aspect of the Carter approach). The added revenue would be minimal in terms of the budget, but by pressing for it Carter succeeded in antagonizing the businessmen, as well as the labor unions in the restaurant trades, on whose goodwill his administration has to depend.

Then, too, it was unbecoming for a supposedly liberal administration to suggest that food stamps be taken away from coal miners if they did not go back to work under the Taft-Hartley Act provisions. This threat was made the same week the United Auto Workers decided to contribute $2 million to the depleted coffers of the miners' union. Concurrently, the farmers' union, mad at the administration because of low agricultural prices, moved to donate food to the striking miners (these low farm prices had, of course, no bearing on what the consumer was paying for food: In February, the wholesale-food price index rose a record 2.9 percent over January's, bringing on even higher retail prices).

There are other notable instances of Carter's inconsistency. Having proclaimed in April 1977 that a national effort to conserve energy is the "moral equivalent of war" (one of the few Carter phrases that *are* remembered—though he borrowed it from William James), he then failed to follow this sentiment up in Congress, as, say, a Lyndon Johnson would have done. Because the House of Representatives passed most of the energy bill, the President assumed that the Senate would do likewise. When the bill was gutted in Senate committees and then on the floor, Carter's behavior turned erratic. While urging the bill's approval, he simultaneously undermined his followers, who had staged a Senate filibuster on the administration's behalf.

To win votes for the Panama treaties, Carter ended his opposition to the $2.3-billion emergency farm bill: This was meant to placate Georgia's Senator Herman E. Talmadge, who then came out in favor of the treaties. Carter also suddenly announced support for the stockpiling of copper by the government (he at first opposed it) to please Arizona's Senator Dennis DeConcini, who held another key vote. Small wonder that more and more people on Capitol Hill snicker that Carter's programs are the "moral equivalent of nothing."

Carter's human rights campaign, a most commendable innovation in U.S. foreign policy, also has bogged down in contradictions and inconsistencies. Well over a year after it was launched, with fanfare, it remains unclear where, to whom, and to what extent the new outlook applies. When the President discovered that his humanitarian concern clashed with American security requirements, a double standard emerged: Violations in some countries were punished with denial of military aid; elsewhere the policy was discreetly set aside.

And there were more inconsistencies at home. In the spring of 1977, the administration was ready to announce an "amnesty" for millions of foreigners residing illegally in the United States, mainly Mexicans. Then the White House became aware of the enormous legal complications of such a

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The attitude taken by Congress is that Jimmy Carter is not believable. When he delivered the State of the Union Message last January, there were catcalls in the congressional audience, something that nobody remembers ever happening before."

step, and the whole idea was quietly dropped. When coal miners prepared to vote on a new contract early in March 1978, senior administration officials warned Congress that power plants were so short of coal that millions in industry would be unemployed by April. On March 9, the day the back-to-work Taft-Hartley injunction was granted by a federal court, Carter announced that if only some miners returned to work, there would be no crisis because the supplies on hand were greater than anticipated. What is one to believe?

THIS, OF COURSE, is the attitude taken by Congress—that Jimmy Carter is not believable. When he delivered the State of the Union Message this past January, there were catcalls in the congressional audience, something that nobody remembers ever happening before (TV network microphones did not pick up the noises of disrespect, but congressmen heard them clearly).

The Congress is obviously responsible for not producing energy legislation—too many vested interests collided when the Senate took up the legislation—and Carter is right when he says that there must be a "partnership" between the two branches of government. But most people in Congress agree privately that a more forceful and credible President would have obtained a law months ago.

When Carter finally announced his intention to use all legal means to deal with the coal strike, the Congress gave him virtual carte blanche to proceed. His well-orchestrated campaign on behalf of the Panama Canal treaties produced Senate ratification despite strong conservative opposition. But it remains a mystery why the President did not apply the same strategy in the battle over the energy bill.

Panama may be Carter's only major legislative victory—and foreign policy achievement—in 1978. With the delays on the energy bill, most other major legislation is expected to remain dormant during this election year. This goes for the tax bill, the welfare reform bill, the national health bill, and probably the full-employment bill. The President's ideas for reorganizing the Civil Service—including the debatable notion of paying bonuses for high performance on the job—are unlikely to be transformed into law.

If recent congressional attitudes are indications of things to come (a bill setting up a federally subsidized consumer protection agency dear to the President's heart was defeated in the House of Representatives when 101 Democrats, incredibly, deserted the leadership), the President will wind up with an exceedingly poor legislative record for his first two years in office.

He will then face his first fundamental test as President in the November elections. If inflation continues to mount and if the lack of confidence in Carter persists, as is likely, the Democratic majority in Congress may be seriously whittled down. Even now there are many senators and representatives who will tell you—very much off the record—that they are not sure they want Carter to campaign on their behalf. Few, if any, of the representatives elected in 1976 came in on Carter's coattails, and in 1978 the President may be a liability to many of them. Recent polls suggest that Carter may be losing much of his southern constituency, and the Republicans are busily courting disenchanted black leaders and voters. It's difficult to predict what will happen in other constituencies, but the President's following among workers, farmers, and the middle class in general is dwindling. The voters are worried and confused; there is talk of an approaching new recession.

Nineteen-eighty is too far away to conjecture about the possibility that Carter will be a one-term President, but the fact that liberal commentators were asking this question even before he completed his first year in office is symptomatic of the possibility. This doesn't normally happen in the honeymoon year. And there is nothing visibly rosy in prospect for the balance of Carter's first term.

Looking at Carter's track record—and deploring the absence of leadership in the White House—we must, of course, ask, What does Carter's rise to power tell us about ourselves and the workings of our political system?

In retrospect, we must conclude that so keen were we in 1976 to draw the curtain across the Nixon-Ford era that we opted for a candidate whose principal asset was that he was new and appeared to be different from his immediate predecessors.

Seldom before 1976 had the nation voted for a politician about whom so little was known. Hindsight, to be sure, is easy. But the truth is that in Jimmy Carter—through the Democratic party's nomination and then the November election—we bought an enigma, and we bought it, really, sight unseen.

Under television's relentless pressure—and through reading the accounts of commentators then enamored of Carter—we believed the string of promises strewn about by the smiling candidate, from his first campaign caucuses in Iowa to his last post-election speech. We loved the idea that Carter's would be an "open administration" and that honesty, sincerity, and effective hard work would be the presidency's new hallmark.

So not enough tough questions were asked, little perspective was sought as to whether Carter could deliver on his promises, no assurance seemed necessary that he would get along with Congress and with everybody else. We were impatient, and we were naïve.

Now that Carter has been in office for 15 months, we are again impatient—this time because the new President has been unable or politically unwilling to keep his promises, because most of his goals remain unattained, and because those of us who voted for the Georgian are just plain losing faith. Inexorably, this impatience and disenchantment deepens the gulf between Carter and his constituencies, renders even more difficult the fulfillment of his objectives, and leads to a pervasive paralysis of the national will to move ahead.

"In terms of aroused expectations, we have clearly failed to meet our promises and hopes," a senior administration official once personally close to Carter remarked sadly the other day. "We don't seem to know where we are going. We improvise. God willing, we shall muddle through." Carter, evidently, promised us too much. We were too quick to believe that he could indeed transform all these words and plans into deeds. The indictment, then, is as much of ourselves as of Carter. ◉

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A Consumer's Guide to Pseudoscience

by James S. Trefil

I HAVE MIXED FEELINGS about the current boom in things parascientific—movies like *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, TV shows about weekly UFO landings, and books about spaceships that descended to earth in prehistoric times. As a physicist, I realize that today's flights of fancy may well be tomorrow's scientific orthodoxy. But it worries me that a public ill equipped to distinguish between razzle-dazzle and sound speculation is swallowing whole many pseudoscientific notions that strike me as silly at best and as a species of intellectual junk food at worst.

My concern here is not, incidentally, altogether cool and disinterested; I still brood about the time several years ago when my son, then ten, was watching a TV "documentary" about ancient civilizations that had been visited by extraterrestrials. When I ventured something mildly skeptical about the show, my son turned on me and cried, "But didn't you *see*? They *proved* it!"

Repeated experiences like this with my children, my students, and my contemporaries have left me convinced that the world could use a kind of do-it-yourself guide to getting one's bearings in the Alice-in-Wonderland realm of unorthodox scientific claims. Before launching into this guide, however, I'd like to make some general remarks about offbeat claims and mention some concrete examples.

As I said above, it's important to realize that unorthodox views are not alien to conventional science. When you come down to it, every accepted scientific principle started out in life as an unorthodox thought in the mind of one man. It follows, then, that in every living science there is a frontier area where new basic principles are being sought and where innovative ideas can gain a hearing. In my own field of physics there are several frontier areas, the most wide-open one being the study of elementary particles (the subatomic objects that in some way contain the key to the ultimate structure of matter). So newness in itself is not now and never has been a basis for the rejection of an idea by the scientific community.

One can visualize the situation in science in terms of concentric circles: At the *center* is that body of time-tested, universally accepted ideas that are set forth in school and college texts. The first circle out from the center is the *frontier*, which interacts constantly with the center, feeding it new ideas that the center, after lengthy testing, adopts and assimilates.

If we move beyond the frontier region of a science, however, we come to a hazy outer circle area that I like to call the *fringe*. The fringe is characterized by a scarcity of hard data and by a general fuzziness of ideas that make the average scientist very uncomfortable. It is a zone in which neither accepted scientific writ nor reasonable extrapolations of scientific knowledge seem to apply. For these reasons, it is an area that scientists generally prefer to avoid.

Yet the fringe has its uses, for it feeds ideas to the frontier, much as the frontier feeds ideas to the center: Fifty years ago, the notion that we should attempt to communicate with extraterrestrial intelligences would most emphatically have been a fringe concept. Yet today this idea has moved into the more respectable frontier circle. (Incidentally, this move illustrates an important point about the ideas contained within both the fringe and the frontier: The soundest, most useful of them keep gravitating inward, ring by ring, toward the orthodox center.)

Now there is only one thing that will make the average scientist more uneasy than talking about what lies beyond his particular frontier and that is having someone express doubts about the validity of ideas that he considers to be established at the center of his discipline and therefore no longer open to question. For example, in the time of Isaac Newton the law of gravity was a frontier subject, but now it is regarded as a principle that has been validated by centuries of experiment and use. This law has passed from the frontier of science and is firmly ensconced within the vital center. Anyone who suggests that the law ought to be abandoned or modified is not going to get a sympathetic hearing unless he presents a very convincing argument.

The progression of scientific ideas from frontier circle to "center" acceptance isn't always smooth. The germ theory of disease and the theory of continental drift are examples of ideas that were considered too "fringy" when they were first introduced. Only long, often acrimonious campaigns won them official recognition.

There have of course been thousands of fringe ideas that never made it to the frontier and thousands of frontier ideas that never gained centrist respectability. The basic problems, then, that anyone, scientist or layman, faces when confronted with a new theory are how to decide where it belongs on the concentric-circle scale and how to determine its chances of eventual acceptance.

In making such judgments, scientists have to keep two criteria in mind: A new idea may be rejected because it is too far beyond the frontier—for instance, too fringy and unprovable; or it may be rejected because it is too far behind the frontier—for instance, a clumsy, complicated way of accomplishing ends already being accomplished by simple, efficient, economical centrist theories. Thus, an overly elaborate, hard-to-prove, Rube Goldberg-like notion could be rejected because it might be at once too fringy and too inefficient in comparison with well-established centrist theories.

With this framework in mind, let's look at some current offbeat theories and the problems they pose for the citizen who is wondering whether to accept or reject their striking claims.

Continued on page 18

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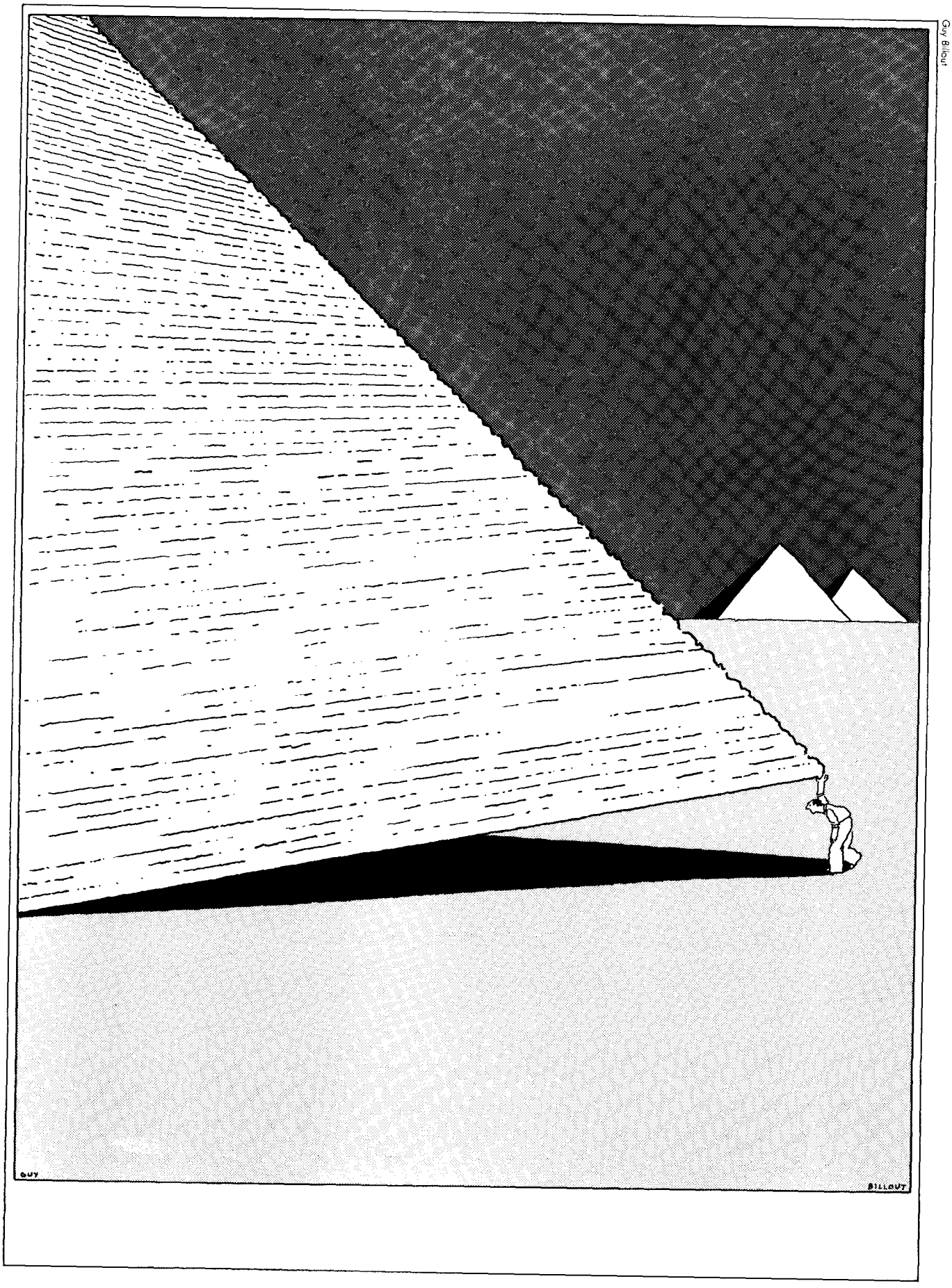

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Pseudoscience *from page 16*

Velikovsky and *Worlds in Collision*

In 1950 Immanuel Velikovsky, a Russian-born psychoanalyst, published a book called *Worlds in Collision* that touched off a minor tempest among astronomers and served as a model for an entire generation of pseudoscientific writing. The premise of his work was that the recent history of our solar system has been marked by a series of catastrophic events and that these events are faithfully recorded in ancient writings. Thus, according to Velikovsky the planet we now know as Venus was ejected from Jupiter about 5,000 years ago (an event recorded in Greek mythology). Thereafter, Venus wandered about the solar system as a comet, experiencing several close encounters with our earth before settling into its present orbit. One of these encounters coincided with the parting of the Red Sea for the Israelites and another, with the stopping of the rotation of the earth for the benefit of the ancient Hebrew leader Joshua. Both of these events and other "catastrophes" too numerous to mention are recorded in the Old Testament.

To substantiate these claims, Velikovsky cited examples from other legends about massive floods and about days when the sun stood still in the sky. He also used the ancient writings to predict the properties of the planets. For example, since the manna that fell on the Israelites during their wanderings in the desert was supposed to have been material from the Venusian comet, he predicted that hydrocarbons (or many carbohydrates—the distinction between the two isn't clear in the book) would be found in the Venusian atmosphere. He also predicted that Venus would be found to be "candescent."

When these claims were made, very little was known about planetary science, so they could be classified as fringe ideas. At the same time, they required that known physical laws (such as the conservation of energy) had to have been violated at some time in the past or the events Velikovsky described would have been impossible. Thus, the scientific community rejected his thesis because his ideas were both too far ahead of and too far behind the frontier. (Velikovsky's followers also claim that a group of professors tried to suppress publication of the book. If this is true, I can only say that professors have less clout now than in the early Fifties.

Velikovsky's claims are set forth in a book that runs to 389 pages in the paperback edition. Faced with this avalanche of fact and hypothesis, what is the reader supposed to do? Well, in Velikovsky's case we're lucky because his book caused so much furor that a number of refutations have been written. The most recent of these refutations is the published proceedings of a symposium held in 1973 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) (Donald Goldsmith, ed., "Scientists Confront Velikovsky," Cornell University Press, 1977). A quick look at the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* or at the card catalog of a public library will turn up other books and articles contra Velikovsky. The counterarguments fall into three categories: questions of fact, questions of logical consistency, and questions of alternative explanations.

Let's take the category of factual questions. As we noted above, Velikovsky claimed flatly that hydrocarbon-based manna from Venus fell upon the Israelites during their desert wanderings. Yet National Aeronautics and Space Administration space probes have turned up no evidence of hydrocarbons in the atmosphere of Venus—although once a scientist was misquoted as saying that an early probe did find such evidence—and the temperature of the planet is about what you'd expect on the basis of the greenhouse effect. (Certainly it's not hot enough to make the surface candescent.) Such evidence helps to clear the air, but it' hardly the kind of knowledge that most of us would have a our fingertips. In keeping with my goal of providing a do-it yourself system for analyzing theories then, I'll have to turn to the other two categories, logical consistency and alternative explanations.

About logical consistency: If you look over Velikovsky's argument, it becomes apparent that the central point is his idea that ancient writings are supposed to be taken as literal, eyewitness accounts of celestial events. Fair enough. Bu when I read the Bible's account of the Israelites' wanderings, I find that the manna fell from heaven daily *except for the Sabbath*. Now I can imagine a comet whose tail contains edible material, and I can even conceive of this edible material falling only on one small area of the earth for an extended period, but I cannot for the life of me imagine a comet that keeps the Sabbath. That doesn't seem to me "logically consistent." This sort of example can be multiplied ad *infinitum* by anyone who looks seriously into the thousands of statements in *Worlds in Collision*.

In the same way—and here we come to the category of alternative explanations—we can ask if it's really necessary to suspend the laws of nature in order to explain the accounts of natural disasters in ancient writings. Isn't there some less complicated way of interpreting these phenomena? Surely disaster is one experience that has been shared, at one time or another, by the entire human race. And of course, the idea that ancient writers never took liberties with facts in order to achieve literary effect is a notion that doesn't stand scrutiny very well. If it did, we'd be faced with trying to explain why ancient writers were so different from their modern counterparts.

Erich von Daniken and *Chariots of the Gods*

If there is ever a prize established for the most rhetorical questions per page, Erich von Daniken will win it hands down. Using this device, he theorizes that mythological references to flying gods actually refer to extraterrestrial visitors to earth and that many of the achievements of ancient civilizations were realized with the help of advanced technology made available by ancient space-faring astronauts. Because so many claims are made in a short space of time, the reader's rational circuits overload and he just floats along. Being unable to challenge every claim, he is reduced to the state of challenging none.

The way to cope with this blizzard of assertions and rhetorical questions (which is fairly common in pseudoscientific writing) is to resist the temptation of allowing the verbal avalanche to bury you. Instead, pick out one or two claims and look into them thoroughly. For example, here's a quote from Von Daniken about the Egyptian pyramids:

> Is it really a coincidence that the height of the pyramids multiplied by a thousand million corresponds approximately to the distance between the earth and the sun? Is it a coincidence that a meridian running through the pyramids divides continents and oceans into two exactly equal halves? Is it coincidence that the area of the base of the pyramid divided by twice its height gives the celebrated figure π = 3.14159? Is it coincidence that calculations of the weight of the earth were found,and is it also coincidence that the rocky ground on which the structure stands is carefully and accurately leveled?

Confronted with a paragraph like this, it would be an unusual reader who would not become intimidated and move on to the next paragraph, carrying with him the definite impression that the Egyptians could never have built the

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"The penchant for ignoring the very existence of a simpler explanation of the facts—an explanation that doesn't require a wildly complicated set of theories—is the besetting weakness of almost all pseudoscience."

pyramids without outside help—even though this claim is not made explicitly. But instead, let's stop for a moment. There are five claims made in this paragraph, and checking all of them could occupy the better part of a day. Few people would want to spend that much time investigating one paragraph in a book full of such paragraphs.

So let's not. Let's pick one claim at random and check it out. For example, in Volume 18 of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Plastics–Razin) I find the information that the pyramids were originally built to be 146.59 meters high and to have a square base of 230 meters to a side. A quick check shows that the claim about π can't be right (actually, any student in a freshman physics class could have told us that you can't get a dimensionless number like π when you divide an area by a height). In the interest of fairness, though, I tried a few combinations and came up with the fact that twice the length of a side of the Pyramid of Cheops divided by the structure's height is 3.138, which differs from π by only 0.1 percent. Assuming that this is what Von Daniken meant, doesn't this bit of research confirm the claim implicit in his rhetorical question?

Not necessarily. Let's take the idea one step farther. If the ancient astronauts intended to have this number be exactly π, it means they mismeasured the side of the pyramid by 0.1 percent. (For reference, 0.1 percent of 230 meters is about 9 inches.) A check through some books on surveying at the library revealed that run-of-the-mill commercial surveying is usually accurate to .01 percent (10 times more precise than the measurements done at the pyramid). A call to a man who teaches surveying yielded the information that beginning college level surveying students routinely get an accuracy of 0.05 percent; not commercial quality but still better than that at the pyramid. What I found therefore was that although an accuracy of 0.1 percent sounds very good, it is actually pretty poor by modern standards. (As an interesting aside, it turns out that all of the dimensions of the pyramid were surveyed with about this accuracy.)

So what do we have? Either the numbers quoted by Von Daniken are the result of the Egyptians' building to plan as best they could, or we have a race of ancient astronauts who could assemble and operate a spaceship but who would have flunked freshman surveying. Take your pick.

This example illustrates one important weapon in the consumer's arsenal. If you ignore an author's invitation to slide over a series of glib claims and instead take a few statements and follow them to their logical conclusion, you can get a pretty good idea of how much weight should be given to the claims that you don't verify. In the case of Von Daniken's rhetorical questions, this probably isn't much.

The pyramid-measuring example also brings up a question that is frequently asked about the pseudosciences: If they're wrong, why aren't they refuted by reputable scientists? The answer is that it would simply take too much time. It took me the better part of a morning to chase down this claim, and an exhaustive analysis of even a single chapter in this one book would take months. Very few scientists have this much time to spare for a project that will not advance their professional standing in any way and that will in all likelihood gain them nothing but a lot of crank mail. They prefer to remain silent (though disapproving) and will only do something if they are irritated beyond endurance (as they eventually were in the case of Velikovsky).

ETI and UFO Phenomena

If I had been writing this article 10 years ago, the field of extraterrestrial intelligence (ETI) and unidentified flying objects (UFOs) would have been relegated to the farthest reaches of the fringe. The whole thing reeked of little green men and bug-eyed monsters, and the Condon report had pretty well established that the great majority of UFO sightings could be assigned a perfectly natural (although sometimes complex) explanation. There seemed to be nothing more to say on the subject.

In the past few years, however, a number of developments have occurred to alter this picture. Astronomers have started to give serious thought to the idea that radio telescopes might be able to "listen in" on signals from other planetary systems. In fact, the search for evidence of ETI has already begun with existing telescopes, and proposals are in the wind to build new ones just for this purpose. In a sense, the interest in ETI constitutes a success story in which a formerly unacceptable idea has moved into the realm of serious scientific consideration.

Although the UFO phenomenon hasn't achieved this sort of status, in recent years a few reputable scientists have been willing to look into UFO sightings to see if there might be something there beyond optical illusion. The results to date are not impressive, but the fact that some scientists are willing to take the time to examine the question is itself significant. I know it may sound terribly elitist to say so, but one of the best indicators of the soundness of a new idea is the willingness of scientists to devote their time to developing it.

Most scientists aren't wealthy, so about the only things they can invest in their career are the time and effort that go into research. Like an investor looking through stock offerings, each scientist has to make a judgment as to where his energies should go to produce the maximum return. Thus, when a scientist passes up "sure thing" conventional research to devote his time to something like listening with a radio telescope for extraterrestrial signals, he's doing the equivalent of putting his money where his mouth is.

Of course, the presence of reputable scientists in a field doesn't guarantee that the ideas being investigated will turn out to be right. On the other hand, there are a lot of conventional research projects that don't prove out either. So although the ETI-UFO subject still has a very fringy flavor to it, the past few years have seen some parts of it move tentatively into the legitimate frontier area of conventional science.

Pyramid Power

This whole pyramid-power business is so far out that I wasn't going to deal with it at all. I changed my mind when I saw the following ad in the catalog of a respected scientific-supplies company:

CAN THE GREAT PYRAMID UNLOCK THE MYSTERIES OF ENERGY & AGING?... Did the ancient Egyptians build Cheops's Pyramid in such a way that the laws of nature are contradicted? Some people have been using exact scale models of the pyramids and are claiming all kinds of things ... meat doesn't rot, razor blades stay sharp, things don't rust, and other strange phenomena. All these claims are based on energy resonating in an exact scale model of Cheops's Pyramid ori-

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ented to magnetic North.

From this ad, it's clear we're dealing with something firmly established behind the frontier. Oh well, back to Volume 18 of the *Britannica* for the pyramid dimensions. Assemble, as I did, a cardboard pyramid. Put a piece of hamburger inside and line the pyramid up with a compass. Wait a few days. Whew!

Do-It-Yourself Checklist

On the basis of the foregoing examples, I think we can now try to list general techniques that anyone can use when confronted with the next plausibly presented arguments for God-only-knows-what new idea. Here are some useful questions to ask:

Are the facts really what the author says they are? Further (and more to the point), has someone already been sufficiently irritated by the author's claims to answer this question for you?

Some of the "facts" presented in any argument just might be wrong, but it's not always convenient to check them out yourself. It's always easier if someone else does the work. For example, trying to run down all the half-truths, rumors, and inaccuracies about the Bermuda Triangle would be a prodigious task. Fortunately, you don't have to do it because it's been done and the results published by Lawrence Kusche in *The Bermuda Triangle Mystery—Solved* (Harper & Row, 1975). In a similar vein, the proceedings of the AAAS symposium mentioned previously give a pretty good overall critique of Velikovsky, so you don't have to go searching around for scattered articles.

Therefore the first thing to do is to check your local library listings on the subject you want to look into.

Is the author trying to overload your circuits?

Although Erich von Daniken is the best (or worst) example of this technique of bludgeoning the reader into quiescence, all such authors that I have read use it. The only defense against the ploy is to pick out a few statements made about a field you know something of and look into them thoroughly. The chances are that if the author hasn't gotten those right, he hasn't done too good a job on the material you don't check.

A COMPACT (AND HIGHLY PERSONAL) GUIDE TO THE FRONTIER AND THE FRINGE BEYOND

★★★★*Is moving into a respectable frontier position.*
★★★*Still does not have wide acceptance, but it's moving that way.*
★★*Probably will never amount to anything, but you might want to keep an eye on it.*
★*Forget it.*

★**Immanuel Velikovsky and Worlds in Collision:** The space program has pretty well taken the shine off this one.

★★★**ESP:** Started life on the far fringe but is moving toward respectability as more hard data is collected.

★★**UFOs:** This old favorite is moving up in the rankings on the basis of new interest by a few scientists, but it could move down again just as fast.

★**Ancient Astronauts:** If the UFOs are here now, they may have been here before, but that doesn't mean one of their crews built the pyramids.

★★★★**Extraterrestrial Intelligence:** There's a reasonable amount of effort and (more important) money going into listening for signals from space. So this subject has pretty well moved into the frontier regions of astronomy.

★**Bermuda Triangle:** It turns out there are no more mysterious disappearances than you'd expect for an ocean area often hit by hurricanes and other storms.

★**Lost Atlantis:** Another group that didn't build the pyramids.

★★**Water Witching (Dowsing):** Ordinarily I'd give this one star, but a student recently showed me not only that he could locate an underground water pipe but that I could too. There's probably a neurological explanation.

★**Pollen Power:** Pollen collected by honeybees is supposed to be very healthful. But since the pollen is taken from the bees before they go into the hives, why not just eat the flowers and eliminate the middleman?

★★★**Acupuncture:** It shouldn't work, but it seems to.

★**Biorhythms:** People are marketing calculators that will allow you to keep separate track of your three cycles (mental, emotional, physical) according to your birth date. But statistical studies show as many successes at the low points as at the high. Another numerological fad.

★**Horoscopes, Phrenology, and Palmistry:** These can be fun if you don't take them too seriously.

★**Perpetual Motion Machines:** Interest in these devices, the ultimate in energy saving, has dropped considerably since the patent office began requiring a working model with each application.

★**Fingertip Reading:** A few years ago the Russians caused quite a stir when they announced that they had found a woman who could read with her fingertips while blindfolded. Various professors at American universities promptly made headlines by claiming they too had located women fingertip readers. When the blindfolds were improved according to instructions from stage magicians, the powers mysteriously vanished, both here and in the U.S.S.R.

★★**Bigfoot, the Abominable Snowman, and All That:** Undoubtedly there's a measure of hoaxing here, but the discovery of something like these creatures wouldn't violate any scientific principles.

★**Loch Ness Monster:** The failures of searches in a small place have pretty well ruled this one out. I draw this conclusion with regret because I was rooting for Nessie.

★**Psychic Phenomena a la Uri Geller:** As far as the various key-bending, spoon-twisting, and remote-reading tricks are concerned, I'll believe them when they are done in front of a panel that includes at least one magician. —JAMES S. TREFIL

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Given the author's facts, is there a simpler explanation of them?

If I had to pick the single failing that characterizes pseudoscientific theories, I would choose their tendency *to propose complex solutions to simple problems*. We have already seen in the case of Velikovsky that the existence of old manuscripts describing cataclysmic events can easily be explained in terms of shared human experiences and of the known tendency of writers to exaggerate. What are we to do then when given the choice between revising almost the whole body of physics and astronomy and accepting as literal truth "facts" that may be only-too-human exaggerations? It seems to me that the most sensible path is to take the explanation that does the least amount of damage to other ideas.

I can't resist mentioning another example of how this criterion works. In the ancient-astronaut documentary mentioned earlier, there was an episode in which a subterranean vault with painted walls was shown. The announcer made a big point of claiming that there was no evidence of soot (such as a torch would have left) anywhere in the vault. The program's conclusion was that the ancient Egyptians must have had access to electric lights and hence had been visited by extraterrestrials.

Now, even assuming that it is correct that this chamber was put together without any soot being left behind by the workmen, does it necessarily follow that the Egyptians were visited by astronauts? Putting it another way, if you were an Egyptian engineer, could you think of a way to get a chamber built without leaving deposits of soot? A few minutes' reflection turns up (1) washing the soot off after the work is finished, (2) sinking a shaft to the chamber to let smoke out and light in, (3) doing it all with mirrors.

The interested citizen should always take a little time to play devil's advocate on such questions because the penchant for ignoring the very existence of a simpler explanation of the facts—an explanation that doesn't require a wildly complicated set of theories—is the besetting weakness of almost all pseudoscience.

Does the whole thing boil down to being unable to prove a negative?

It is impossible to prove that there are no unicorns. All we can prove is that we've found none so far. If the end result of a long argument (the "bottom line," if you prefer) is nothing more than the statement that a particular theory can't be disproved, you are probably safe putting it in the same class as unicorns.

Are established scientists putting time in on the phenomenon?

In the case of UFOs and ETIs, discussed above, one element in our considerations was the fact that a number of reputable scientists have been willing to bet their valuable time that the idea has something to it. While this doesn't guarantee that an idea is right, it does mean that someone has looked into it thoroughly and has come up with the conclusion that it's worth looking into a little more.

Having said this, let me hasten to add a caveat. There is no proposition on God's green earth so silly that it can't find at least one Ph.D. to support it. If you're going to use this criterion in judging a theory, find out who the scientists are. A quick check in *American Men and Women of Science* or in *Who's Who* will give you some idea of the credentials of the person involved. If you want a standard of comparison, look up Peter Sturrock, of Stanford University—he's one of the people with sound credentials who are investigating UFO sightings these days.

Finally, you have to realize that this "credentials" criterion is only one of several you should use in making a judgment. If the theory sounds fishy to you, if you feel that the conclusions are unreasonable, and if the arguments of the scientists don't convince you, then so be it. In the final analysis, you have to make up your own mind anyway.

Can you test the theory yourself?

If you have a mechanical turn of mind, you can occasionally check out a claim yourself, as I did with the pyramid-power test.

Ask such simple questions as those on the checklist when you're reading the next book that reveals the secret of the ages—they will help you decide whether you're looking at a genuine scientific breakthrough or at just another addition to the fringe. There are two areas in which such questioning will be of little help, however, and we might as well get them straight right now. If outright fraud is involved—as it is reputed to have been in the famous "demonstration" by Uri Geller at the Stanford Research Institute—going through this sort of questioning will do you little good. There is no way that fraud can be detected secondhand by the layman, and there is probably no one more ill equipped than the average scientist to deal with outright duplicity. Also, the test questions really don't apply to writings that are specifically nonrational, such as the mystical and drug-oriented books that were so common a few years ago. Such books aren't playing the same game as those by the pseudoscientists and therefore can't be judged by the same rules.

No discussion of pseudoscience would be complete without some comment on its social implications. I am well aware that many of my colleagues regard modern pseudoscience as the forerunner of an antirational swing in our society and denounce it in terms that are worthy of that doom-crying German philosopher Oswald Spengler. I feel that this is something of an overreaction. Pseudoscience has been around at least as long as (and perhaps even longer than) conventional science. Perhaps it serves some deep need of human beings to believe that there is still some mystery—something unknown—left in life. Maybe the unknown thrives because people like to see the pompous scientific establishment discomfited ("Okay, Mr. Know-it-all, explain *this* one"). Or maybe it's just that P. T. Barnum was right about a sucker being born every minute. None of these interpretations constitutes a threat to conventional science.

After all, Luigi Galvani's "animal electricity" cures in the nineteenth century didn't impair the development of the science of electricity. Mme. Blavatsky's theosophy certainly had little effect on American science. And despite the apocalyptic terms with which it was greeted, it would be hard to show that Velikovsky's *Worlds in Collision* has had much of an effect on modern astronomy. At its worst, pseudoscience is a minor inconvenience of the cocktail party variety; and at its best, it is good entertainment. I certainly make no apology for the fact that I enjoyed reading Velikovsky and Von Daniken, even though I think they are wrong.

On balance, I'd say the best attitude to have toward pseudoscience is the one reflected in the story (probably apocryphal) about the time Groucho Marx attended a séance. After the usual hand holding, table thumping, and light dimming, the medium announced in funereal tones that she was now in contact with the spirit world and that the participants could ask any questions they liked: Nothing, she said, was hidden from the spirits. Without hesitation, Groucho shot back, "What's the capital of North Dakota?" ◉

Dr. James S. Trefil is a physicist at the University of Virginia.

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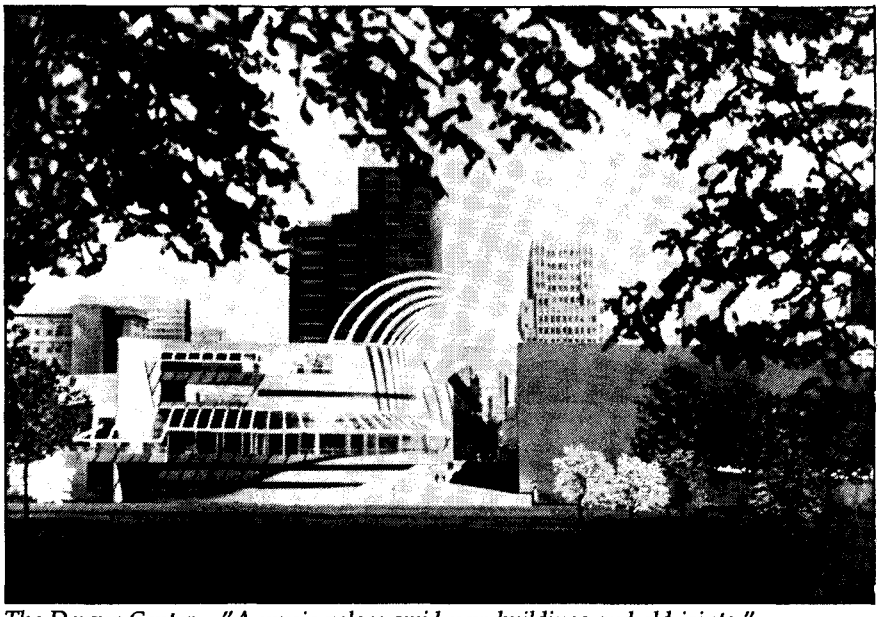
DENVER'S "SURROUND" CONCERT HALL: IS IT A GOOD IDEA?

by Irving Kolodin

FOR THE itinerant music critic, Denver has long been a place to visit on the way to someplace else in Colorado: to Central City for opera; to Aspen for high-level (7,850 feet) chamber music; to Boulder for seminars at the University of Colorado; and to Colorado Springs for one of Dick Gibson's jazz weekends. The recent "grand opening" of Boettcher Concert Hall has created a new focus of interest within Denver itself—a palace for music amid new 40-story office buildings and old joints, in a city long famous for fresh air but now beset by smog problems.

Ambitious as it is, Boettcher Concert Hall is only the first in a series of developments intended to establish Denver as an arts, as well as a sports and a money-minded, capital of the New West. The hall is the cornerstone in the evolving Denver Center for the Performing Arts, which will include theater and film centers, all connected by a huge, glass-roofed Galleria clearly related to the one in Milan. Boettcher (so styled because of major financing by a foundation bearing a name famous in Colorado's history) shows enterprise in design as well as careful attention to an all-important detail for which concert halls are famous or infamous—acoustics.

Internal appearance takes precedence here over standard considerations of good sound. What greets the visitor is a mammoth enlargement of what is well known as theater-in-the-round. Why such a nearly circular, but asymmetric, layout of 2,700 seats in a hall for music? In order, says one of its planning participants, to promote informality, to get away from the long-time convention of a rectangular space in which one quarter is devoted to a platform for the performers and the other three quarters to the audience.



The Denver Center—"A music palace amid new buildings and old joints."

My first reaction on viewing a hall in which the banks of seats on four sides are surmounted by an encircling "ring" under the ceiling (for sound dispersion) was: "What a place for a prize-fight!" But my second reaction, after seeing a rehearsal, and my third, after attending a concert, were more sympathetic to the basic "surround" idea, if not wholly convinced by its implementation.

This long stride in the right direction may be credited to acoustician Christopher Jaffe. Deprived of the rear wall that acts as a reflective surface in most concert halls and of the side surfaces that give the listener a sense of immersion in a tonal bath, Jaffe has decreed the creation, here and there, of baffles to break up the sound waves. Below the stage he has placed an open space (dubbed a "moat") to build up the reso-

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nance of such low-toned instruments as the cellos and basses. Above all floats a cluster of large acrylic disks (106 by his count) that may be raised or lowered within a range of eight feet.

What is the outcome? Considering that the Denver Symphony—good as it has become under the able direction of Brian Priestman—is not one of our superorchestras, the quality of sound heard in the new hall was uniformly pleasant. But the quantity of sound, especially at top and bottom, left some details unheard. When one member of the string section was asked whether the players could readily hear one another onstage—an all-important necessity in a good hall—he said, "It's better than it was before, now that they have raised the reflectors, but it still isn't what it ought to be." Queried on this and other points, Jaffe replied, "It's a matter of trade-offs: You get more intimacy in this kind of a room, but you can't arrange the reflectors outside of a certain pattern or they block the vision of some members of the audience."

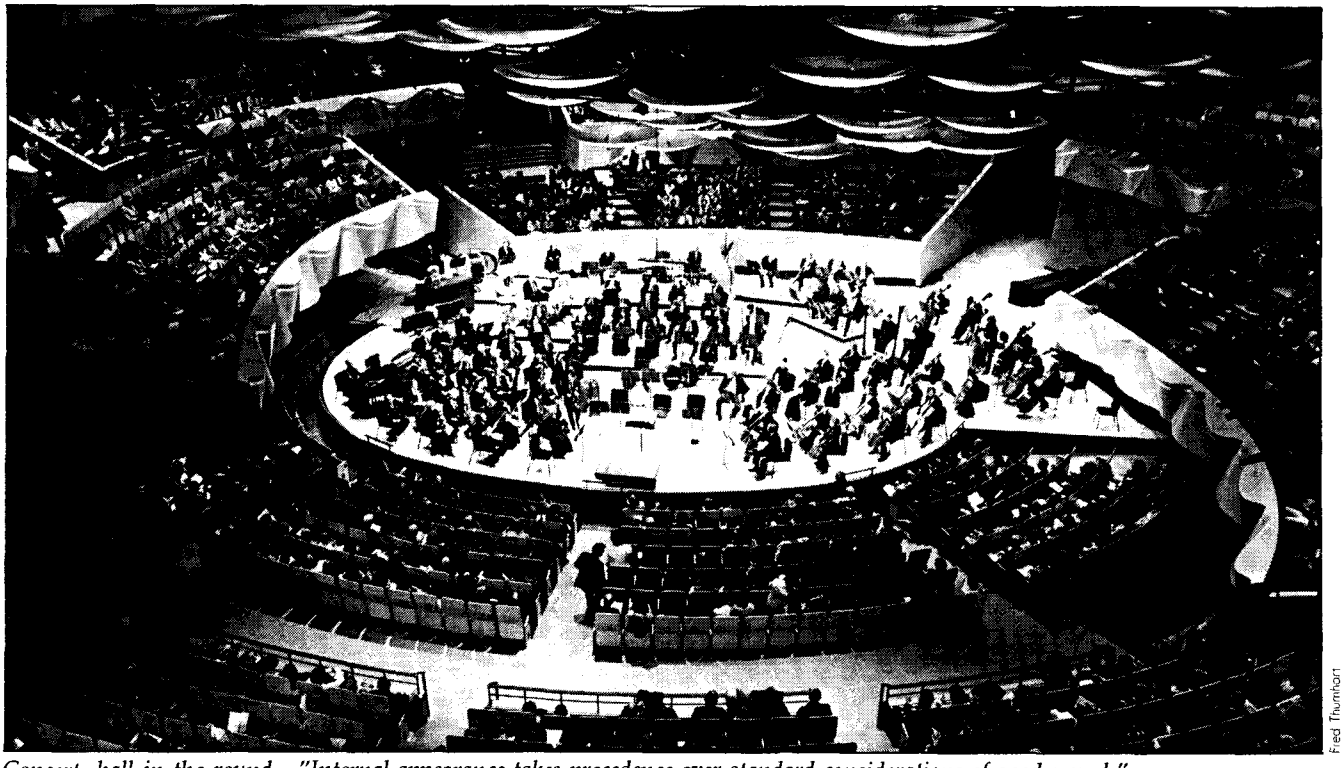
The "grand opening concert" (as it was billed) added something not previously available for evaluation—an audience. The festive mood was summarized by an elderly, well-dressed man who said to his wife, as they (and I) were approaching the entrance, "I've been waiting thirty years for the symphony to have a decent home." As the audience assembled, it brought with it an animation, a sense of physical presence, a diversity of appearance, to replace the hall's previously unvaried pattern of terra-cotta-colored chairs with their blond plywood backs (for sound dispersion).

Music finally attained its proper place (after speeches in which "magnificent" was as redundant as "ladies and gentlemen") with a lovingly shaped performance of Ralph Vaughan Williams's "Serenade to Music." This composition, curiously, was also on the opening program of Lincoln Center's Philharmonic Hall (in 1962). In Denver (with the choral portions sung by groups from the universities of Colorado and of Denver), it sounded better. Then Van Cliburn came on as a sonorous, if less than spontaneous, performer of the solo part in Tchaikovsky's B-flat-minor piano concerto. Finally, Priestman conducted a meticulously prepared, admirably energetic playing of the Brahms Symphony No. 4 (in E minor).

Here the realities settled firmly into place. For a publicized amount of $13 million (against the $27.4 million expended to build Philharmonic Hall in Lincoln Center and to revise its interior to sound as it does today as Avery Fisher Hall), Denver has acquired a civic asset of the first importance. But it hasn't resolved my reservations about a surround hall. It should be great for soloists, particularly pianists. Singers, I am told, will have to accommodate themselves to performing for the audience in back as well as the one in front. But side and back views of orchestral players trying to make a living contribute nothing at all to musical enjoyment.

Why then the surround hall? In all probability, because some architects love to innovate rather than to duplicate and also because changing conditions have altered freedom of choice. In the nineteenth century, interiors were constructed of wood and plaster, which, in a well-shaped room, proved to have an uncommon affinity for sound. Under today's building codes and fire prevention regulations, other materials take precedence.

So far, the best precedent for Boettcher Hall in Denver is the Philharmonie in Berlin, home of the Berlin Philharmonic, whose lifetime conductor is Herbert von Karajan. In a conversation in Salzburg a year ago, Karajan recounted the circumstances in which the Philharmonie had been converted from a tolerably good hall into an excellent one. In planning for a series of TV films, the director had asked that the strings be arranged in tiers, rather than having the musicians sit on the flat stage as is customary. "The change in sound was sensational," said Karajan. "It was so good we adapted the same arrangement for our concerts." In other words, no hall is ever finished until all its possibilities have been exploited. Good as Boettcher is, there is still work to be done.

Denver papers, please copy. ◉

Fred Thurnher

Concert-hall-in-the-round—"Internal appearance takes precedence over standard considerations of good sound."

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THE MOVIES

The Worst Years of Our Lives

by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

I TAKE COMFORT in the report that we can expect a half dozen or more movies in the next year about the Vietnam War. So many of our national institutions, beginning with the executive and legislative branches of government, have agreed to drive the war out of our consciousness that we must be grateful to Hollywood for its willingness to stir repressed memories of that awful American adventure. Indeed, the whole period of the Sixties has acquired with extraordinary rapidity the aura of some remote, exotic, self-contained time—as if the Vietnam War had not ended only three years ago, with President Ford pleading for more military aid to enable General Thieu to keep on fighting and with Governor Carter of Georgia supporting his request.

Coming Home (United Artists) is a project of Jane Fonda's and obviously antiwar in its outlook. What other position can one possibly take about Vietnam? The problem, however, is to present the position without 20/20 hindsight and ideological self-righteousness. Things were not always that clear at the time. When Vice-President Mondale recently described the late Hubert Humphrey as the "conscience of the nation," it was a shuddering experience for those who recalled Humphrey's impassioned defense of the Vietnam War. Still, the dramatist must recognize the realities of the age. As the historian Frederic William Maitland once said, "It is very hard to remember that events now long in the past were once in the future." Another problem is how to translate general attitudes toward the war into persuasive human situations. And yet another problem is in deciding whether one is protesting the war in Vietnam or war in general.

The antiwar film is hardly a new genre. The revulsion against the First World War produced some of the best films of the Twenties and Thirties. The genre developed its own stereotypes, some of which are reproduced in *Coming Home*. One of the memorable scenes in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, for example, has a German teacher working his class of teen-agers into militarist frenzy, only to be followed by Lew Ayres, the weary soldier on leave from the trenches, telling the bitter and disillusioning truths. In *Coming Home*, a marine recruiting sergeant whips the students up, and Jon Voight, the paralyzed veteran, cools them off.

Coming Home's basic plot is itself a stereotype, and not even of the antiwar film. A wife falls in love with a wounded non-com while her officer-husband is away fighting on the front. Such things have happened and brought much pain with them; but this is not a plot that connects up terribly well with an antiwar message, even if, as in *Coming Home*, the paraplegic veteran is a dove and the absent husband, a hawk. The attempt to demonstrate a connection by making the gentle dove a better lover than the macho hawk only strengthens the flavor of falsity in the film. The capacity to induce orgasms is not necessarily correlated with the wisdom or folly of one's politics.

Coming Home reunites Hal Ashby, the director, and Haskell Wexler, the cinematographer, who last year joined their talents in that lovely and underrated movie about Woody Guthrie, *Bound for Glory*. Jane Fonda is superb in the central role. She is her father's daughter all right—a fine, honest actress in the romantic naturalist style, transcending the rather glib images (new hairdo; revolt against the editorial restrictions of the newspaper put out at the post by the officers' wives) through which the film depicts her growth into maturity and independence. Both Jon Voight as the paraplegic and Bruce Dern as the husband are arresting but flawed—Voight not quite able to overcome the fact that his part as written is too good to be true; Dern so far into his instability act before he goes to Vietnam that the war's supposedly deranging impact on him does not work. The script is careless. Even Fonda cannot make altogether convincing either her strangely unemotional parting with her lover or her professions, before and after, that she really wants her husband.

Nor is Ashby's direction firm and consistent enough to persuade one to accept the implausibilities of the script. He succumbs to a couple of irritating tricks in the film. One is heavy crosscutting to hammer home ironic points: Dern jogging to prepare for Vietnam while wounded veterans in a hospital crawl miserably around; Voight attacking the war before the high school class while Dern wades into the South Pacific like Fredric March at the end of *A Star Is Born*. Another is an intrusive sound track that often drowns the dialogue in the querulous rock songs of the period. The climactic scene, in which the three at last confront each other, is badly botched, with Fonda required to stand uncomfortably through shot after shot holding her arms out to her husband, who meanwhile feebly flourishes a bayoneted rifle.

Still, for all its speciousness, *Coming Home* seems to me a valiant though stammering attempt to speak to profound national perplexity and guilt. Its most powerful scenes have no explicit argument at all: They simply display post-Vietnam life in the Veterans Administration hospital. Insofar as the film argues, it says that war is bad because it kills, cripples, and brutalizes people—perhaps not a politically sophisticated contention but entirely the sort of case that the nonpolitical persons portrayed in the film would naturally make, and therefore entirely right in the context. Too broadly stated, this contention would be an argument against all wars. Yet Voight in his most comprehensive disquisition on the subject qualifies his repugnance over killing for his country by saying that "there isn't enough reason for it" in Vietnam, which implies quite correctly that better reasons might alter the problem.

Coming Home, while hard on the surface, is soft at the core. Nonetheless, more than any other fiction film, it recalls, however imperfectly, the horrid waste and destructiveness of the most shameful war in American history, the worst years of our lives. I salute Jane Fonda for insisting that it be made. ◉

Fraser Young
Literary Crypt No. 106

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. *Answer on page 51.*

C T S C X C D Y Y I J T B I T

D B M D A R C D Y A T K J -

Q J X B R X X .

— Q X T R C T

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POPULAR MUSIC

"White Noise" Hangovers

by Stephen Demorest

WANT TO KNOW how you distinguish a veteran from an amateur in the pop music business? The veteran knows enough to wear earplugs.

I forgot mine at a recent rock concert and wound up on my knees, in pain, frantically stuffing my ears with spitballs. Later, the offending guitarist snickered and uttered one of the credos of macho rock 'n' roll: "If it's too loud, you're too old." Then he removed his own earplugs.

How rude! And no one warns the unsuspecting audience. Greater love hath no fan than to let his ears ring with rock 'n' roll, but I vow never again to suffer a "white noise" hangover, that morning-after hum that corresponds to the cotton taste on a drunkard's tongue.

It's a loud world we live in, so crowded with products that each one must scream to get attention: *The Poison That Fell from the Sky* (EEEEKK!); "Just Scream and Enjoy" (EEEEKK!). Ads even scream about love: "Searing, Turbulent Romance" (EEEEKK!). In nature, loud volume generally signals alarm, but only man cries wolf with such consistent dishonesty that his fellows grow skeptical and, finally, indifferent.

It is the young, of course, who are most easily conned by such bogus brouhaha. Loud music—be it rock or disco—has become a secular religion, an aural opium, and Hilly Kristal (owner of the punk club CBGB) isn't joking when he says, "The drug of choice for kids these days is loud sound." One prominent bass guitarist typically stands directly in front of his mammoth speakers, glassy-eyed, body surfing on the sound waves that buffet him like gale-force winds. It's not uncommon to see kids running up onstage to bow their heads reverently right into the maw of the giant woofers; no wonder they stumble out of arenas with brains turned to sawdust, like the scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*.

Pop music profits from the subtle hypnosis of "hooks," those seductive tonal curves that lend personality to a melody. The friction of brisk pacing also creates the illusion that a song is hot stuff. But the easiest (and most tyrannical) means of grabbing attention is through aggressive volume. "For best results, play this record loud!" many liner notes declare, and with good reason. Smart producers know that cranking up the sound will fog the "mix," masking the incompetent playing and the flabby composition that would otherwise be all too obvious. For the inept musician, volume is the crutch of last resort.

I'm not against loud sound in limited doses. Seven blasting trumpets can be very effective if you want to tumble the walls of Jericho. And as Haydn demonstrated with his *Surprise Symphony*, a good shot of ultrasound is just the thing to startle an audience whose attention is beginning to wander. (In the film trade, they call one of these sonic shocks a "sting.") The exuberance of punk bands like the Ramones and the Sex Pistols can be bracing, and more than once I've caught myself edging up the volume when playing a favorite record, carefully packing my Eustachian tubes with music like a hypoglycemic stuffing his face with "just one more" chocolate drop.

Unfortunately, that's a great way to get sick. Despite the rock canon that loud is great, there is a ceiling in any musical onslaught beyond which the mix begins to fall apart. And our friends in the medical and scientific professions have a further caution: Tests have proved that certain frequencies and rhythms are destructive to human tissue and disharmonic with our biorhythms. [See "The Deadly Anapest," page 27.]

In a society where might makes right, all too often it's the loudest voice rather than the most cogent reasoning that prevails; but there are signs that the public's tolerance for noise pollution is wearing thin. Last year, New York witnessed a minor insurrection when residents tied up Kennedy Airport to protest the roar of the *Concorde*, and in England, local councils now set decibel ceilings for rock shows.

Meanwhile, one of the freshest trends in pop music is the "minimalist" sound. Talking Heads, picked by *Rolling Stone* as 1977's best new band, derives its intensity from dynamically compressed arrangements—but the music is not loud. Jamaica's reggae music relies on deft but spare karate-chop percussion, while cult star Jonathan Richman dampens the sound of his drumheads with towels. Environmental recordings of surf and of whale songs are selling respectably. And British aesthetician Brian Eno is pioneering a style of "discreet" music so mild it's nearly inaudible.

The young will always assert themselves by being loud, of course, until they in turn are drowned out by others—or until they learn there's more magic in whispers. Meanwhile, they can blast away all they like, but volume won't alter the substance of their sound. ◉

Stephen Demorest has written for Rolling Stone, The New York Daily News, *and* Crawdaddy.

"How many calories in a swamp?"

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THEATER

Campbell's Soup Plays

by Martin Gottfried

ANDY WARHOL'S Campbell's soup cans said something about this time of ours. They said that criticism is no longer necessary. His silk screens didn't distort the cans to comment on the pervasive influence of advertising. They didn't have to. The cans themselves said it all. Warhol assumed we were aware of basic taste and sense. He could present the thing and let it criticize itself. All things could. I think nowadays they do.

Timbuktu! is a new Broadway version of the 1953 musical *Kismet*, which was, in turn, a new version of (a) an old play by Edward Knoblock with (b) "new" melodies culled from the music of Aleksandr Borodin. It its own day, *Kismet* was a gross affair, actually subtitled *A Musical Arabian Night*. It had wazirs and caliphs and Omar Khayyam and Alfred Drake and "Stranger in Paradise."

Timbuktu! is an all-black adaptation of *Kismet*. Need more really be said? Speaking in terms of Warhol's soup cans, I don't see how words can say as much about the production as it says about itself. All-black versions of anything are commercial these days on Broadway. *Timbuktu!* has tried to justify its blackness by resetting the *Kismet* story, caliphs, wazirs, and all, in western Africa. Borodin's music, which is vaguely Eastern in its Russian exoticism, has been provided with occasional drumbeats. Otherwise, this show is not black. It is not musical theater. It is a parade of costumes by Geoffrey Holder.

These costumes are bizarre at best and grotesque at worst, drawn from a palette apparently shared with the Castro Convertible people. Half the company is on foot-high platform shoes. As the show's choreographer-director, Holder has the performers march to and fro, exhibiting his costumes, too burdened by the bulk and weight of their dress to be either directed or choreographed. There are many men flexing greased, body-builder muscles. They are nude except for sequined jockstraps. They are all Holder has allowed to distract from his costumes. Eartha Kitt has top billing but a small part, which she plays as a self-parodied sex kitten. The curtain calls seem her major assignment. After elaborate curtsies, she flings an enormous wrap into the orchestra pit. I think comment would be superfluous.

Thrillers come to us from the same era as *Kismet*. Aiming to update the genre, Ira Levin (*Rosemary's Baby*, *The Boys from Brazil*) has doubled the tricks, as if more equals different. The proposition of his play, *Deathtrap*, is that we are watching a thriller as it is being written. The main character writes mysteries. He comes across a play that seems a surefire success and, not having had one of his own lately, is tempted to steal it at the expense of its author's life. His wife is appalled, even more so when the young man is strangled in the living room. And that's only the first 15 minutes.

I'm not sure whether thrillers are obsolete. I'd guess good ones would still be enjoyable, but Broadway hasn't been producing them regularly since the days of *Witness for the Prosecution* and *Dial "M" for Murder*. Was *Wait Until Dark* the last? *Sleuth*? *Deathtrap* seems to remember a lot of them, but then *Deathtrap* is about the writing of mysteries as much as it is one. Satire is never far from its mind. The trouble is that it's never sure whether to concentrate on satire or on thrills, or even whether laughter and fright are theatrically compatible. John Wood, the play's main actor and a marvelous one, plays the lead as if the part were a lot more challenging than it is. But hamburgers do not improve with cream sauce. The first act of this play *is* funny and exciting. The second act, however, is repetitious, boring, and finally silly. Is *Deathtrap* worth it or not? Is it passé or contemporary? Now *there's* the mystery; but it is a solvable one. Once more, the thing speaks for itself. *Deathtrap* is what it is: ingenuity running out of steam.

Timbuktu! and *Deathtrap* are representative of a Broadway that has grown ever more conservative. The businessmen are in charge. Why else would we

"Just a few questions, if you don't mind."

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have still another revival of *Hello, Dolly!*, the second since the show's 1964 opening (and it ran till 1970)? *Hello, Dolly!* is a wonderful example of the Broadway musical. Its script enjoys an original sense of humor. Using bright caricature, it bridges the gap between a musical's heightened level of reality and a drama's naturalism. The directing and choreography are models of style, and the show never stops dancing. The music is catchy, and the settings are striking (though a touch seedy in this revival). Carol Channing's marvelous original performance has become part of Broadway lore, and here she is, doing it again.

Can this be real? The same show with the same star, 15 years after the fact? What has happened to time? Are we trying to restore the past? In the past couple of seasons, Broadway has had Zero Mostel repeat his *Fiddler on the Roof*; Yul Brynner, his *The King and I*; Richard Kiley, his *Man of La Mancha*; and now Channing, her *Dolly*. If this is not an attempt at time freezing, the rejection of the present, and a defiance of age, it certainly does reflect on Broadway and its fears. One gets the feeling that rather than do new works, which is its mandate, New York's commercial theater would just as soon fill up auditoriums with sure bets. If those bets include every single production that ever succeeded, with every original star, so be it. Broadway is becoming a theatrical wax museum on America's Main Street.

Sam Shepard is a playwright who sees America's Main Street in one of Warhol's frames. To Shepard, the country has come to seem a picture of itself. His *Curse of the Starving Class* is a sort of photo-realist *The Cherry Orchard*. It is about the children of the Broadway people—the Broadway people who make these shows and go to them. The children are starving (food, or the lack of it, is the play's running metaphor). They are starving for roots. In Shepard's play, a pair of adolescents are fighting their parents' wish to sell the old homestead. For all their alienation, their new and strange ways of thinking and talking, the children see this home as a metaphysical one; it represents basic values. But it is being sold anyway to make way for commercial housing developments.

Is the Broadway theater also being sold out by cheap capitalizers? Shepard's play is being done Off-Broadway, for the sake of art. *Hello, Dolly!*, *Deathtrap*, and *Timbuktu!* are being done on Broadway, for the fast-food theater trade. Are they theater or Campbell's soup cans? ◉

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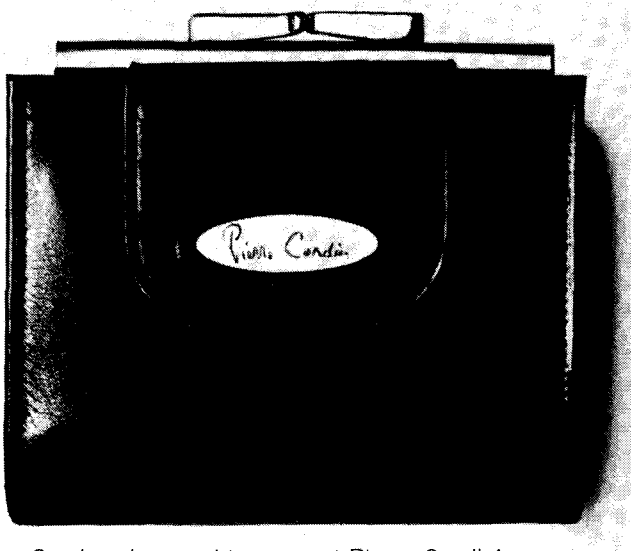

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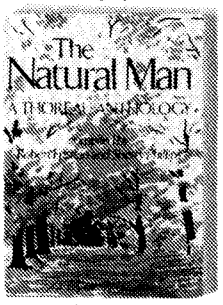

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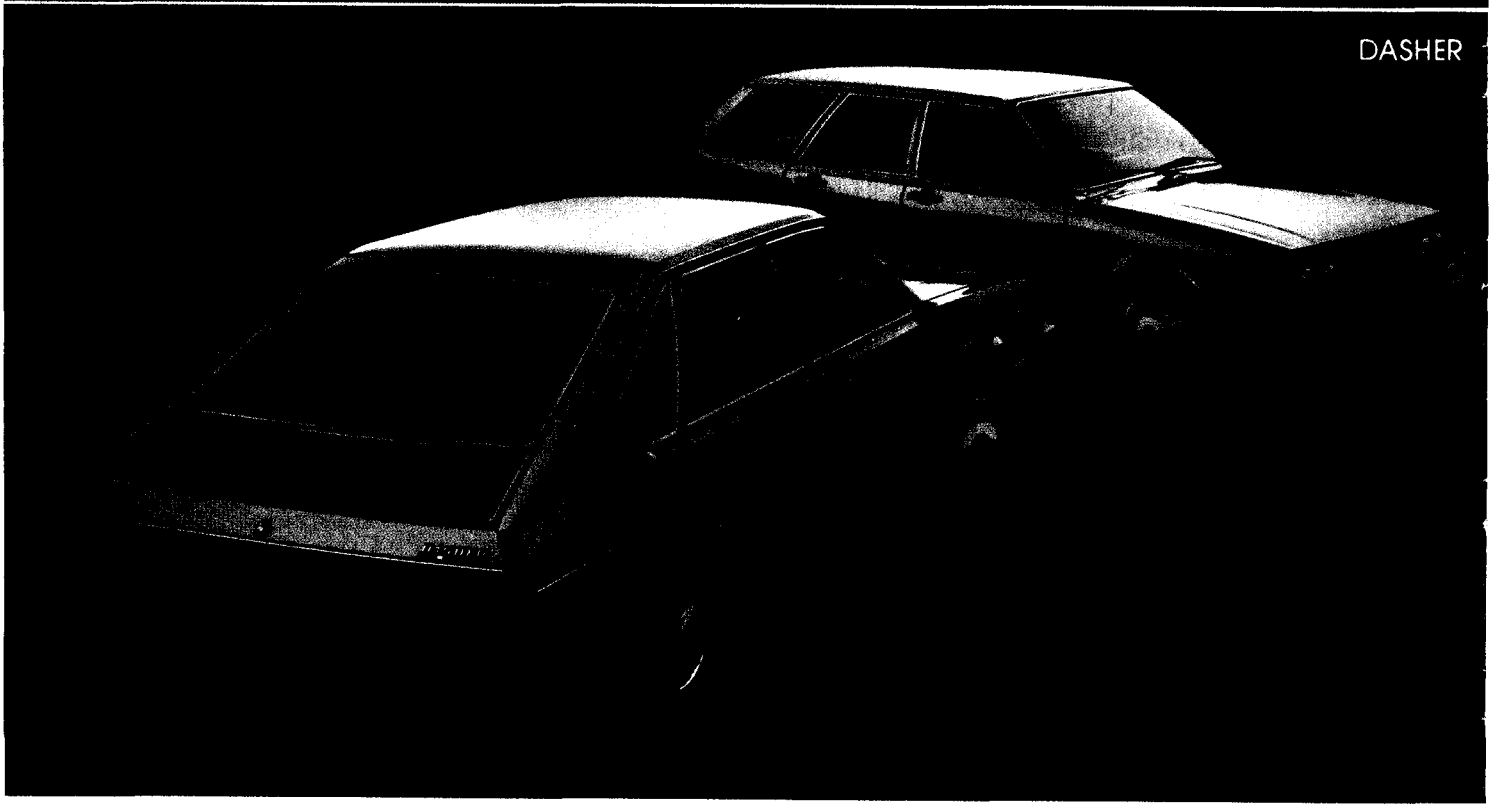

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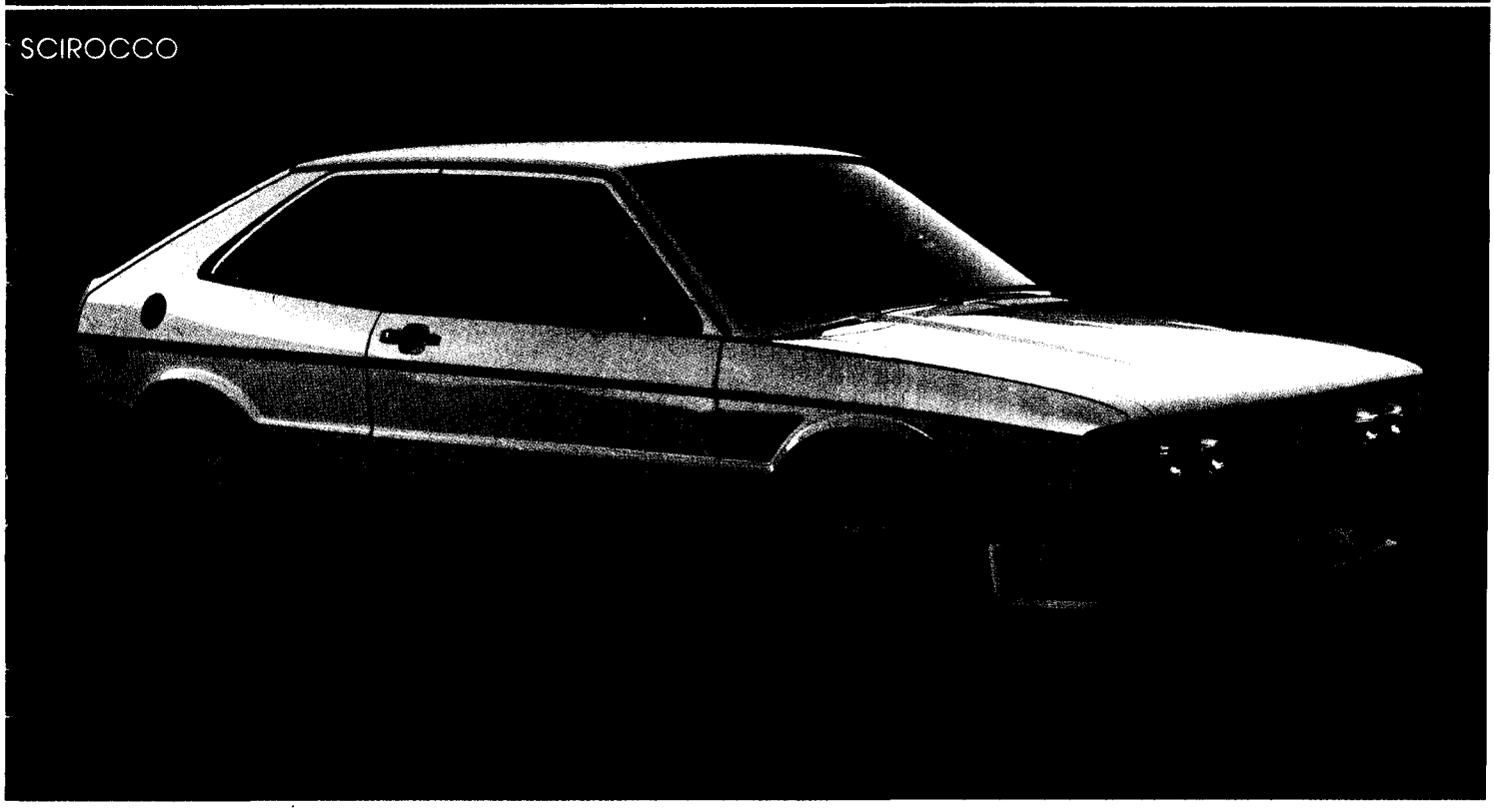

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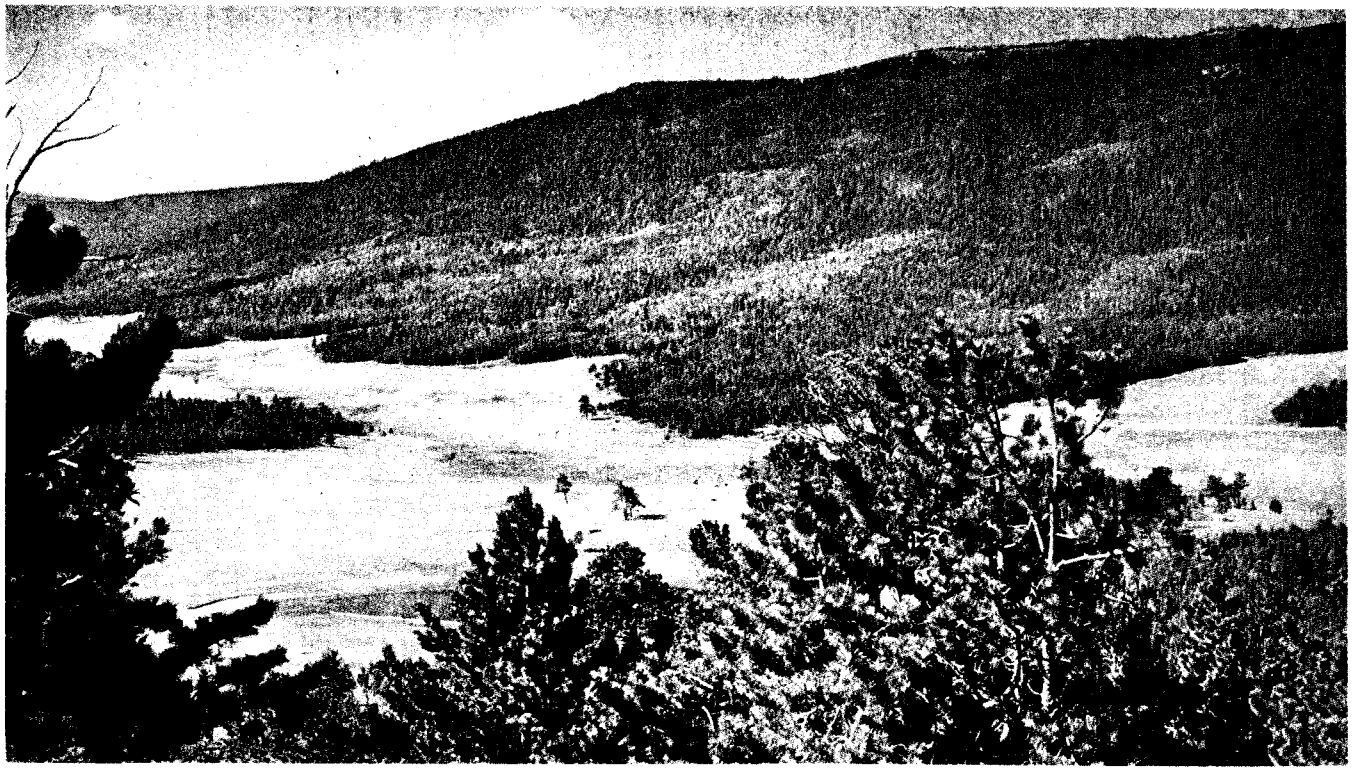

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VISHNU AS DOUBLE AGENT

Gil Eisner

Kalki
by Gore Vidal
Random House, 288 pp., $10

Reviewed by John Simon

UNTIL NOW, Gore Vidal's fiction has mostly been wickedly clever. With his latest novel, *Kalki*, Vidal ascends into a new category: diabolically clever. I say "diabolically" rather than the more innocuous "devilishly" because what has increased is not the cleverness but the nastiness. *Kalki* is a hybrid: part social satire; part slick entertainment (in the Graham Greeneian sense); and part doomsday comedy in the manner of, say, Stanley Kubrick's cinematic black comedy, *Dr. Strangelove*.

Some of Vidal's diabolism manifests itself right away, in the plot's construction. For *Kalki* is a thriller, and by an ancient and honored custom, reviewers are not allowed to give away the main twist in a thriller's plot. What comes to their aid, however, is that the twist tends to be a single fact near the end of the book, one that the critique can easily sidestep. Here, however, the presumably unbetrayable twist comes much earlier and permeates and affects everything before and after it, just about tying a reviewer's hands before he can properly begin.

Still, if I tell you that in *Kalki* the world does come to an end, I am not committing an unpardonable crime. For such is Vidal's cleverness that the suspense continues beyond Armageddon and hinges on such fascinating posers as "Will anyone survive?" and "If so, who?" and, above all, "Can a new race arise, and if so, what will it be like?" With such tricks still up his sleeve, Vidal can go on flaunting his mastery of suspense within suspense. And about his eschatology—or is it dysteleology?—I shall keep strictly mum.

Continued on page 32

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Kalki *from page 31*

The heroine and narrator of *Kalki* is Teddy Ottinger, divorced and self-sterilized mother of two, champion aviatrix and Amelia Earhart idolater, and perpetual student of engineering and the humanities, with a dominant interest in French literature—particularly Pascal. Teddy is also the nominal author of *Beyond Motherhood*, ghostwritten by one Herman V. Weiss, hack. Furthermore, she is a practicing bisexual with a preference for lesbianism, living with Arlene Wagstaff, aged forty-two plus, who is a sort of combination Arlene Francis and Barbara Walters, plus, of course, Vidal's vivid fantasy. Teddy has at least a working knowledge of a great many other things, and herein lies the novel's first problem: She is too multifarious to be a fully believable character. At the very least, she is distressingly twofold: the bright, enterprising, but also eminently fallible thirty-four-year-old female dilettante and the omniscient author of *Kalki*—well, at least as omniscient as Vidal is capable of being: say, somewhere far beyond your standard entertainment writer but still this side of Pico della Mirandola.

Not only is Teddy at least two people, she also is at least two styles—perhaps rightly so for a bisexual, about whom one of her presumably favorite authors might have said, "The styles are the man-woman." Though much of what she sets down is sharp, pertinent, and virilely concise, she will also resort to the kind of sneaky shortcut appropriate to what used to be referred to with the now justly obsolete term "the weaker sex." At such times, Teddy (or Vidal) merely invokes a phrase like "as H. V. Weiss would have put it" and blithely plunges into blatant platitude. And even when she is not Weissianizing, Teddy fluctuates disturbingly between an enlightened best seller style (better, to be sure, than an unenlightened one) and an intermittent finer thing. Exactly what that is is hard to define; call it an American approximation of Evelyn Waugh—just as deadly, but a shade less funny.

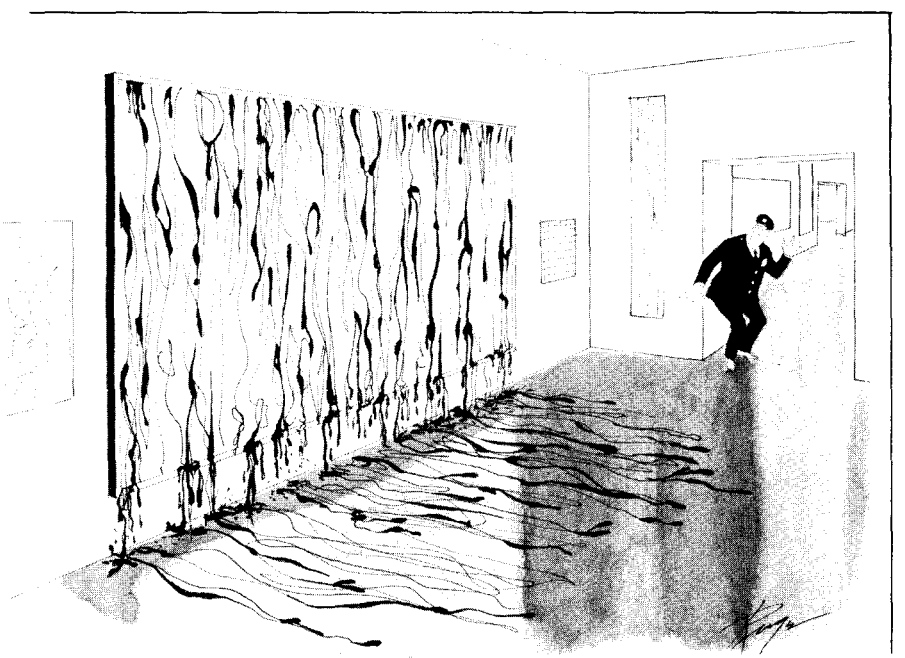
Here enters the second problem. Vidal conceives of the novel as a receptacle for all of his personal gripes. Settling a personal score by dragging in a real person from left field seems needlessly bitchy. And not only bitchy but also something worse: essayistic rather than novelistic. There was, of course, a style of novel writing in the eighteenth century that could accommodate the odd essayistic excursus, but amid Vidal's fast, nervous forward movement even a clever disquisition on Jewish princes and princesses in fact and fiction feels inappropriate—to say nothing of a less skillful harangue against politicians. Moreover, Vidal often makes things too easy for himself, as when he describes Weiss as a "cliché master and structuralist" and demonstrates only the former sin. I happen to dislike structuralism every bit as much as Vidal does, but guilt by association is not an honorable procedure even in fiction.

A word or two about the plot now seems indicated. A new incarnation of the god Vishnu appears to have materialized in Nepal. This Kalki, as he calls himself, whose cult is rapidly encircling the globe, preaches the proximate end of the world and the chance for his converts to be in line for eventual reincarnation rather than face the irredeemable destruction that awaits everyone else. For some reason, Kalki—who turns out to be ex-sergeant Jim Kelly from New Orleans, who was assigned to a chemical warfare unit in Vietnam and who may be using this religious revival as a front for his international dope racket—wants no one but Teddy Ottinger to write the series of articles with which *The National Sun* hopes to scoop Mike Wallace. And so Teddy goes off to Katmandu.

That may be enough of the basic plot, though mention should be made of a few other major characters. There is the beautiful and blonde goddess, Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu-Kalki-Kelly, whom Jim met in Chicago's Drake Hotel when she was Doris Pannicker and engaged to another chap. There is the pretty and smart redhead, Geraldine O'Connor, who forsook a professorship in biochemistry at MIT to become one of Kalki's five Perfect Masters. And there is that mysterious Indian, Dr. Ashok, whose card reads "Professor of Comparative Religion at Fairleigh Dickinson University" (how cunningly Vidal picks the aptest title and spot for a potential phony), who may or may not be Dr. Giles Lowell, Jim Kelly's former professor of medicine, and who may also be a narc, a member of the CIA, and a hit man for a rival Chinese dope ring out to get Kalki.

All this would be fine if *everyone* in the novel were not a double agent of Vidal's—a pawn of his whimsy rather than a character real enough to dictate his own terms to the author, as truly successful fictional creations seem to be able to do. Here, however, a narc (a triple agent, but still a narc) will openly declare, "The single, nay, unique objective of the Bureau [of Narcotics] is the *increased* sale of every kind of drug all over the world," to which a demagogic senator running for the presidency will add that without international drug rings his richly funded Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control "would wither away." Equally implausibly, a fellow from Internal Revenue will proclaim, "We at the IRS never assume that anyone is innocent until he is proved guilty. That is the American way."

Satirist's privilege? Not so; in high gear, satire has its own crazy plausibility, as Vidal well knows. Thus when a television director for *60 Minutes* says about the interview in which Kalki announces the date on which he will end the world, "This segment will run ten, ten and a half, maybe eleven



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minutes, you know, an in-depth study," this is barely, if at all, tampering with the preposterousness of things as they are. Or take a doctor's urging Arlene "to give up tequila in the morning. He begged her to switch to a good, light, refreshing breakfast wine from the Napa Valley. He himself owned a share in a vineyard. He would sell her his own brand." Vintage satire, that. Equally crushing is a seemingly casual remark like, "Over the years what Arlene had not had lifted could never have fallen"—which might have been even better with the addition of two commas.

A man who can so easefully carry off such sardonic effects ought not to settle for less. Yet Vidal will stoop to the heavy and obvious. He writes: "Dr. Ashok looked so crazed that, for the first time, I thought him not only sane but possibly serious despite the essential frivolity of his alleged employer the CIA." Here both the facile paradox and the unduly propaedeutic tone of "the essential frivolity of his alleged employer" seem to me miscarriages of satirical justice. Yet Vidal can do worse. He will become pontifical and leave a good piece of satirical raw material uncooked: "This was a commonplace in that era: events were only real if experienced at second hand, preferably through the medium of the camera." Moreover, he will mix metaphors (and not deliberately—the speaker is his alter ego, Teddy): "the dark caravans of words that cross the pages of newspapers to invade and ravish the delicate house of memory like killer ants." It is unnerving to have camels shrink in mid-metaphor to ants, however deadly. Or take, "Miscegenation was in the air; it hovered like a mushroom cloud between us." This is not mixed, merely clumsy: Even in an ironic context, a mushroom cloud is too much to invoke apropos a black man's stare at a white bosom, and the image bombs out. And any schoolboy of Vidal's acquaintance could have written "the effect ... was ghostly, ghastly," which is only ghastly.

But then, for a fastidious, indeed finicky, writer, Vidal can become remarkably sloppy. Thus the Hindu phallus is the *lingam*, not the *linga*; the Latin for duplicity is *duplicitas*, not *duplicitatem*; Chomsky's first name is Noam, not Noah; "imposter" is a vulgar error for impostor; "Myna birds" is a redundancy for mynas; "forthcoming" is not acceptable in the sense of communicative or outspoken; no Frenchman would write "de Vigny" for Vigny; "could not help but" is tautological; and so on.

But—and it is, as it is so often with Vidal, "but" time once more—there are also wonderful things in *Kalki*. There is at times a lightness of touch that nevertheless reduces the satire's butt to mincemeat: "I was able to read the odd page by Joan Didion, the even page by Renata Adler," which with the greatest gentleness makes both writers out to be unreadable. Or take: "Since talking to taxicab drivers was the hallmark of the higher journalism, I asked the driver what he thought of Kalki." Again: "I affected an even deeper sincerity. I sounded to myself like a Malibu surfer discussing ways of getting together his/her inner space." Or, a TV commentator lapsing into TV grammar: "I think all of we Americans...." And what about this splendid *reductio ad absurdum*: "The Australian press was unusually aggressive. Apparently, they had once been able to drive Frank Sinatra out of Australia. This feat had made them overconfident." And, most devastating of all in its lethal concision: "Ms. Brownmiller's book on men, and rape," where putting the declared subject last and what Vidal takes to be the real one (sour grapes rather than bitter rape) first is a masterstroke of ingenious—or insidious—ridicule.

But—again but—this meticulous writer is capable of such lapses as having a singular child on page 245 turn into plural children on the next page. Such things are disturbing. But more disturbing still is the ultimate question this novel raises: Can one really pardon the feeling one gets in reading *Kalki* that Vidal would welcome the end of the world? This slips out time and again: "But then [if I were God] I would not have gone to the trouble of inventing the human race"; or "I did not believe that Kalki would switch off the human race... as desirable a happening as that might be." Not even Swift, in all his *saeva indignatio*, went that far.

And yet, and yet—one cannot help savoring a master satirist able to put down a whole subcontinent with a mere description of arrival at New Delhi airport: "The moon was still bright in the western sky. The dawn was pale pink. The air smelled of wood smoke, curry, shit." And who is able to dismiss the end of the entire world with, "You cannot mourn everyone. Only someone." ◉

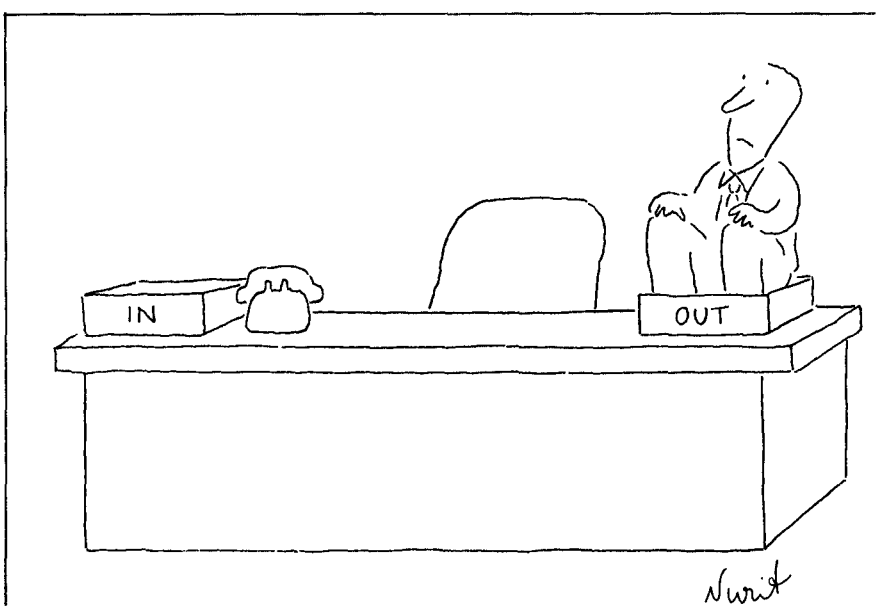
John Simon writes a column on language for Esquire *and is film critic of* National Review.

Beyond Romance

An American Romance
by John Casey
Pocket Books, 455 pp., $2.25

Reviewed by
Joe David Bellamy

CONTRARY to the evidence that argues otherwise—from *Pamela* to *Wuthering Heights* to *The Catcher in the Rye*—we persist in our superstitions about first novels. A first novel is something *committed*, like a faux pas or a burglary. Like a first date, it will probably be a little clumsy and embarrassing. Out of simple good taste, a first novel is best ignored. Let the poor kid learn the ropes, and if he makes anything of himself in 10 or 20 years, there will always be his masterpiece to contend with and plenty of time for a retrospec-



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tive. Now in John Casey's prodigiously accomplished first novel, *An American Romance*, we have yet another example to debunk these fallacies.

An American Romance is a major work, a finely detailed novel of character and sensibility that marks the debut of a mature, confident, and full-bodied talent. It contains no warming-up exercises, no pointless flexing of muscles, no wasted motions, and no sophomoric cutenesses. It is as ambitious and as unpretentious as an egg.

The romance of the title is an extended mating ritual enacted between Anya, a self-centered ex-Radcliffe smarty zinging with raw energy and ambition, and Mac, an ex-Cornell hockey jock whose virtues are always getting him in trouble. She is "a good idea he'd never thought of." He is the only person she's ever met who would "rather be ruled by virtue than by passion."

Both are making voyages of self-discovery while discovering each other. Both are seeking personal solutions to the unique problems posed by coming of age in a particular place—roughly, all of North America, but especially the New York-Boston-Iowa axis—and both are seeking lives commensurate with their own problematic standards in a time—the present—when the old standards no longer seem to apply.

From their first meeting as graduate students on a rock-climbing outing, they seem mutually absorbed with the complex ways "their separate magnetisms sorted [ideas and objects] out into their separate styles." The true subject of the novel becomes the minute exploration of the consciousness and character of each of them and the ebb and flow of their relationship and their understanding of it as they slowly, inexorably merge.

They have to solve problems beyond each other, however, before their coming together can be made permanent or significant. At the outset, Anya finds that the "way she was leading her life, for all its academic and sexual variations, was not giving her... the full risks and satisfactions that she desired. ...It was a question of finding some act that was as large as her energy." When Anya is invited to Iowa to serve as the director of a communal repertory theater and Mac decides to accompany her, she thinks she may have found it.

Her quest first takes the form of hectic ingenuity within the theater group, where she marshals her brains and sensibilities with admirable thoroughness: willing, coaxing, and bullying the players to carry out her visions; casing out promotional possibilities on the local scene; hustling seasonal engagements for as far away as Chicago's North Shore. Her chutzpah reaps dividends, but her success seems small scale. She still keeps wondering, "What next?" She has the urge "to rise on a magic carpet of cosmopolitanism" and isn't sure how this can be accomplished.

At the same time, she is "terrified... to think that her ambition was uncontrollable. That her ambition was not, after all, part of her intelligence, her talent, or her craft—that it was deep-rooted, childish, possibly crazy—that it might even betray her." Increasingly for Anya it seems that her ambition may end up preventing her from finding personal happiness.

For Mac, coming to terms seems to involve giving himself over to useful labor and becoming a self-effacing pillar of civilization. His role in the commune is that of set builder and handyman, but he also begins to work part-time as a farmhand to help support Anya and the group, cook elaborate rustic meals, fish and hunt for food, and generally knock himself out. For him, the issue seems to boil down to the question of civilization versus barbarism. His experiences in the army and as a hockey gladiator have raised doubts in his soul about his own dangerously savage inclinations. He thinks his salvation lies in the submersion of self through exhausting physical labor and devotion to caretaking, building, and nurturing activities and in a solitary communing with nature, slowly listening to the music of his nerve endings. He turns out to have quite an aptitude for self-abnegation.

If this casting of the female as careerist, the male as domestic ballast, seems like a reversal of traditional roles, it most certainly is; and *An American Romance* is one of the first novels to treat the complexities of such changing social patterns without demeaning either party.

Casey is often surprisingly intelligent (we had almost forgotten how sheer intelligence in a novelist might feel, and, more than that, his *characters* are intelligent). Casey's most enviable accomplishment, however, is one that requires gift as well as guts, patience and intuitive force as well as technical mastery. He creates characters with depths; characters whose layers peel away like artichoke leaves, revealing even greater complexities within; who have the feel, the stamp, of individual temperament. His intricate dissections of character and emotion cause one to think in new ways about personality and about the flux and mystery of rela-

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tionships. Somehow he has managed to find new combinations of language to describe bubbles of feelings, inarticulate longings, unconscious habits of rumination, and the subtle interaction of humors. He so successfully persuades us that we are every bit as complicated as we always knew we were that when Anya finally comes to the realization of "how their lives had merged, in an ordinary, lumpish way, from a sharp physical attraction—but no sharper than a lot of others, surely—to this weight of knowing him," we can fully understand how Mac and Anya have progressed beyond romance to something more enduring. ◉

Joe David Bellamy, whose books include The New Fiction *and* SuperFiction, or the American Story Transformed, *teaches at St. Lawrence University. He is editor of* fiction international.

The Good Life According to Kristol

Two Cheers for Capitalism
by Irving Kristol
Basic Books, 260 pp., $10

Reviewed by Webster Schott

READING IRVING KRISTOL in *The Wall Street Journal*, I've sometimes thought he should be moved bodily to the U.S. Bureau of Standards. Sitting there in a moderately comfortable armchair—everything about Kristol calls for moderation—he would receive social and economic ideas wafted over from the floors of Congress or the groves of academe and filter them for reasonableness. He might fulminate now and then, and some of his responses would drift into opacity. But overall, the intellectual processes directing change in our society would tilt away from impossible dreams and toward practical solutions.

Irving Kristol is a kind of Paul Goodman of the center. He is articulate, intelligent, politically astute, and socially oriented. He comes from the same semi-apostate New York Jewish literary intellectual establishment as Goodman, but via one of the better neighborhoods. With Stephen Spender he founded the British *Encounter*. Lately, Kristol has been Henry R. Luce Professor of Urban Values at New York University. Unlike the Utopian Goodman, Kristol wants to lay fresh mortar into our eroded institutions rather than to tear them down and build new ones. "I regard the exaggerated hopes we attach to politics as the curse of our age, just as I regard moderation as one of our vanishing virtues," he said in the introduction to his *On the Democratic Idea in America* (1972).

Kristol likes labels about as much as he likes Karl Marx. He considers himself nonideological and strictly rational. He is nevertheless a registered Democrat. He served on a Nixon task force and was a principal of *Encounter* when it received laundered CIA money. For purposes of identification, Kristol would have to travel as a neoconservative with such figures as his friend Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Nathan Glazer, his coeditor at *The Public Interest*, a scholarly magazine devoted to political and economic debate, which Kristol founded with Daniel Bell, in 1965.

Aside from the density and weight of his usual subject matter, one of the problems in reading Irving Kristol derives from his position as a naysayer. The man who wants to put on the brakes instead of stepping on the gas usually has fewer ideas about where to go. With this book, we now get a clearer image of what Kristol and perhaps the neoconservatives are for and with how much passion. *Two Cheers for Capitalism*—Kristol's collection of essays on corporate capitalism, democratic values, social justice, and misdirected idealism—signals his preference with a title borrowed from E. M. Forster. As with Forster, Kristol's choice carries a modified conviction: "Socialism, communism, and fascism have all turned out to be either Utopian illusions or sordid frauds." Capitalism, on the other hand, "represents a sum of human choices about the good life and the good society." Unfortunately, says Kristol, "these choices... have had their associated costs, and after two hundred years the conviction seems to be spreading that the costs have got out of line." The job he sees ahead of us is "to take the liberal or radical impulse, which is always with us, and slowly to translate that impulse into enduring institutions which engender larger loyalties."

Kristol has some concrete ideas about how to do this, but he makes his proposals only after much regret over our present confusion. So before considering them, it's necessary to describe Kristol's analysis of the economic psyche in the United States.

First of all, he says we need help because we've forgotten or, worse, re-

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jected where we came from: "The Founding Fathers *intended* this nation to be capitalist and regarded it as the *only* set of economic arrangements consistent with the liberal democracy they had established." (An intriguing interpolation of the Bill of Rights into the history of economics, I think.) However, the private enterprises and small family businesses that Kristol believes the authors of the Constitution imagined switched personae. They were superceded early in the twentieth century by publicly owned corporations. It was a radical shift from Adam Smith's "system of natural liberty" to a corporate capitalism featuring giant institutions that strove for immortality, sought heavy returns on investment, and were governed by an anonymous oligarchy.

Americans didn't like it. Because we didn't understand the principles governing these institutions, we began to distrust them and the system that bred them. The earliest anticapitalism was born out of what Kristol calls the populist mood, "the constant fear and suspicion that power and/or authority, whether in government or out, is being used to frustrate 'the will of the people.'"

Lately, hostility toward capitalism has assumed the aura of ethos and the zeal of ideology. Since so many of Kristol's concerns revolve around this gnawing new anticapitalism, one wishes he were more precise in identifying its roots and constituency. He does relate it distantly to the tradition of progressive reform, and he identifies John Kenneth Galbraith as one of its villains. He brands its members variously as upper-middle-class elitists, antiliberal leftists, socialists, and a "'new class' who believe—as the Left has always believed—it is government's responsibility to cure all the ills of the human condition." Utopian remedies that would deny freedom in the marketplace are crawling out everywhere from under the "protective shell of reformist-liberal rhetoric." Proposals for national economic planning; the desirability of "'public'—i.e., political—appointees to the boards of the largest corporations"; the "utter 'reasonableness,' in principle, of price and wage controls"—all are part of the tradition of the Left and are being passed off as progressive reform while "the structure of American society is being radically, if discreetly, altered."

At this point, Kristol develops a backfire theory of disaffection with capitalism. He says it worked too well. Capitalism promised us everything: continued improvement in our living conditions, freedom to think and do just about whatever we wanted, opportunity to cross cultures and to leap over social class. Most important, capitalism implied nourishment for our souls as well as for our bodies—a crucial line of thought in *Two Cheers for Capitalism*. "It held out the promise that, amidst this prosperity and liberty, the individual could satisfy his instinct for self-perfection—for leading a virtuous life that satisfied the demands of his spirit (or, as one used to say, his soul)—and that the free exercise of such individual virtue would aggregate into a just society."

We have gotten the good life all right, but we have turned decadent in our affluence, reducing the pursuit of happiness to a "ludicrous parody of capitalism in which we consume all possible brands of pie in the sky." We spend our freedom on sex, drugs, and Gucci loafers. The class we want to join is supposed to improve our tennis backhand or expand our consciousness.

Along the road to the new split-level ranch house surrounded by crabgrass we abandoned religion. Education showed it up as obsolescent. Simultaneously, we transferred to capitalist institutions the injunctions we once attributed to religion. "It is the death of God, not the emergence of any new social or economic trends, that haunts bourgeois society," Kristol says. Our philosophers warned us from the start: "The 'middling' nature of a bourgeois society falls short of corresponding adequately to the full range of man's spiritual nature, which makes more than middling demands upon the universe, and demands more than middling answers."

Kristol extends this proposition into the argument that we're unconsciously biting the hand that feeds us. Our thwarted aspirations toward spiritual fulfillment have turned on the system. Our religious drive now expresses itself in demands for greater equality of income and privilege, in the growth of fervor over the environment, in the multiplication of government agencies regulating the behavior of capitalist enterprises, in the social programs of a naïve Johnson administration that believed we could buy our way out of poverty. All restrict freedom in the marketplace in the name of values once associated only with religion. What God has never been able to do for us, even at the height of our devotion, we now propose to exact from corporate capitalism.

Reformation, not reversal, is what Kristol foresees: "There is no more chance today of returning to a society of 'free enterprise' and enfeebled government than there was in the sixteenth century of returning to a Rome-centered Christendom. The world and the people in it have changed." But corporate capitalism and the welfare state must also change because they cannot survive as they are: "The welfare state of today has been constructed in such a

"Luke, there's an artist feller here wants to wrap the barn in polystyrene. What do you say?"

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heedless, often mindless, way that, like so many hasty reformations [of nineteenth-century capitalist societies], it creates as many problems as it solves." Corporate capitalism must change because "in its heedless emphasis on economic growth and ever-increasing prosperity, [it] incites ever more unreasonable expectations, in comparison with which the actuality of the real world appears ever more drab and disconcerting."

If *Two Cheers for Capitalism* sounds gloomy, opinionated, and stubborn, then I've conveyed its mood. But it also echoes voices we are hearing elsewhere. Kristol wants us to think smaller and simpler. We should get our social conscience back to basics. We need a comprehensive national health program and should enact one. We need a means of assuring ourselves dignity in old age. He tells us to address directly the problem of the maldistribution of wealth. Enact a tax code that prevents anyone from inheriting more than one million dollars during his lifetime (it's an idea Jefferson and Montesquieu would like). Learn from Europe by instituting children's allowances to sanitize our welfare programs but avoid demeaning and socially divisive qualifying tests. Kristol says our successful social reforms—social security, Medicare, public education—have been "universal." Kristol makes sense about corporate responsibility: Business must learn to explain its behavior to the public, democratize its relations with shareholders, and regulate its profits. Everything is more complicated than it seems, even to Kristol. Technology has altered our lives. Political and economic systems survive at the mercy of their physical environments.

While Kristol's essays merit quiet celebration, they leave much unsaid. Our capitalistic success rose from our treasure of natural resources and a growing population. Now, U.S. capitalism is devouring our own and the world's resources. In another decade, 8 of the 10 minerals necessary to an industrial society will probably be depleted in this country. Corporate capitalism could consume itself to death. Our excessive combustion of fossil fuels is turning our rain to acid—10 to 100 times more acidic than a decade ago. Acid rain is rendering our freshwater fish sterile and stunting the growth of our trees and our plant food supply. Kristol's attack on environmentalists diminishes him. He calls the Environmental Protection Agency "a major obstacle to the redevelopment of the inner city" and the environmentalist movement "an exercise in ideological fanaticism."

Kristol masters in economics, history, and polemics, but he misses in science and technology. He fingers policy, not structure. Yet structure breeds policy. Still, I like these essays because Irving Kristol knows a great deal. He makes us think about questions that won't go away: What is a good life? What is the compact between each of us and the rest of society? ◉

Webster Schott is a corporate executive and literary journalist.

Critic, Friend, and Teacher

The Eye of the Story: Selected Essays and Reviews
by Eudora Welty
Random House, 320 pp., $10

Reviewed by Carole Cook

WITHOUT ITS STORYTELLERS, any nation would be reduced to the moral equivalent of a trading post, and after two generations of spinning the tales that have literally created the Delta country and the Natchez Trace (but not Yoknapatawpha County, which is another world also unto itself) for us outsiders—shy for one reason or another of Mississippi—it is sensible and honorable to regard Eudora Welty as a great national resource.

An ordinate amount of claptrap has been written about Eudora Welty. Critics and reviewers have picked over her work with a fussiness or, perhaps even worse, a glib glossiness. As for the burgeoning field of Welty scholars, her response has been to reiterate quietly that while she respects the difficulty of the work of the analyst, she cannot corroborate his schematic and symbolic interpretations of her stories—which are just that: stories.

But don't think for a minute that this is typical artistic disingenuousness on Welty's part. Nothing, let us hasten to say, is typical about Eudora Welty, even if she has sometimes found it convenient to make it seem that way. The introduction to her snapshot album of depression-era Mississippi, *One Time, One Place*, helps explain why her home state has been her locale. No professional photographer, no outsider, could ever have captured the naturalness of her subjects, but she was "part of it, born into it, taken for granted." From this unique vantage point, unseen as the fly upon the wall, Welty has

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been able to write about all that is neither typical nor taken for granted in the life of the South. Originality of both subject and technique has been her one constant.

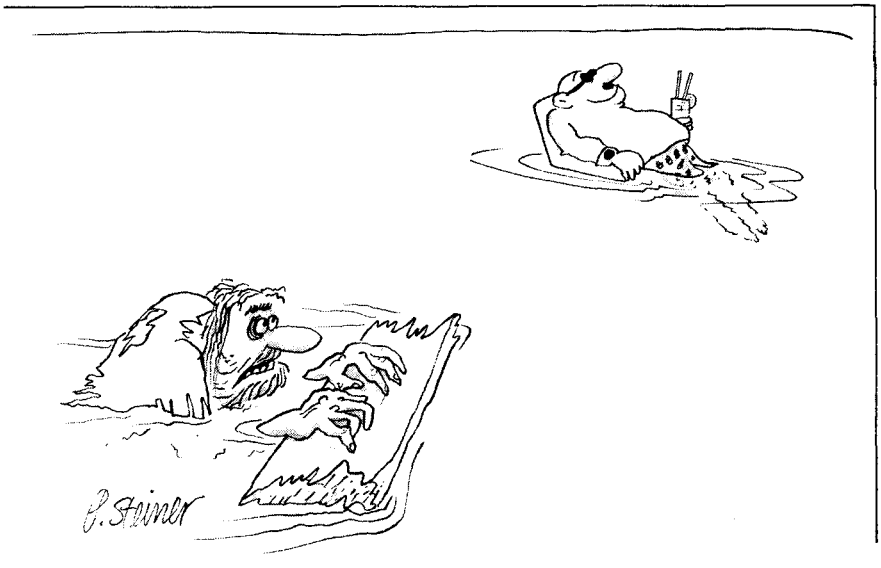
So we look to this collection of essays, reviews, and personal pieces—many of which, like Welty herself, have appeared in out-of-the-way places—to see what it reveals about her artistic creed and affinities. And lo, in addition to her canny insight into the work of her peers and masters and her great gift for pinpointing a writer's inspiration for coming to writing at all, many of these studies seem to be as much about Eudora Welty as about anything else.

For instance, all that she has to say about the noise and commotion in the novels of Jane Austen (whom Welty named once as her favorite author)—"the family scene! The dinner parties, the walking parties, the dances, picnics, concerts, excursions"—immediately conjures up the excitement of Dabney Fairchild's wedding, Granny Vaughn's ninetieth birthday party, Judge McKelva's funeral. And of whom exactly is she speaking when she asks how the future will treat this spinster who, confined to the world of her father's country parsonage, "could never have got to know very much about life" and then, thinking of Austen's intimate relations with the gentry, goes on to wonder, "Will they wish to call her a snob?"

Welty has said elsewhere of Chekhov, "He had the sense of fate overtaking a way of life, and his Russian humor seems to me kin to the humor of a Southerner. It's the kind that lies mostly in character," and it is through this prism of Welty's that we see Chekhov's reality. Aristocrats, kulaks, serfs, the Emancipation—all have a southern counterpart in the critic's mind.

When she illustrates an essay on Katherine Anne Porter (a longtime friend and an early supporter whose 1941 introduction to *Curtain of Green* is still one of the best essays around on the art of Eudora Welty) or on Willa Cather with a passage from one of their works that displays their insight into human character and their ability to crystallize transitory psychological states, we think to ourselves, Why, Welty herself could have written that! Her appreciation of Elizabeth Bowen's refined wit is an act of homage as well as of connoisseurship; her enthusiasm for the humor of S. J. Perelman makes one suspect that she may also have learned a trick or two here. While her high school peers, she confesses, "were studying 'How long, O Catiline, must we endure your orations?' I was taking in '"Gad, Lucy, You're Magnificent!" Breathed the Great Painter' ... from a copy of *Judge* on my lap," and it is quite apparent from the bizarre, grotesque bits of humor that stud her stories, from her acute sense of the spoken language, and from her swift narrative pace that she had everything to gain by studying living American, rather than dead Latin, rhetoric.

Her respect for Faulkner goes without saying, but her awe of Virginia Woolf impresses us even more, because what Welty has gotten from her is so intangible. Yes, color and landscape from Faulkner, plot and irony from Austen, understatement from Chekhov, and so on down the seemingly endless list of Eudora Welty's accomplishments as a stylist. But it is Woolf who is her consummate artist, from whom she takes, I think, an entire attitude toward the act of writing. For Welty writes about Virginia Woolf as if she were an icon, a holy woman, a seeress of fiction.



If this were all there was to this volume—a series of touchstones for understanding Welty's stories—it would be quite enough. But as it happens, there is also a second dimension, another and more splendid gift from Welty to her readers. For in her studies of individual writers and in the more abstract section "On Writing"—which includes her defense of regional writing ("Place in Fiction") and of Faulkner, "the white Mississippian" ("Must the Novelist Crusade?")—she has made that dry art of criticism into a human, even moving practice. As critic, Welty is not lawgiver but friend and teacher. The words "feeling," "passion," "life," "communication," occur again and again in her attempts to lead her reader by the hand up to the books that have meant so much to her.

She explains at one point—referring most probably to the discovery of her own vocation—that "it's when reading begins to impress on us what degrees ... of communication are possible between novelists and ourselves as readers that we surmise what it has meant, can mean, to write novels." *What it can mean to write novels*. This, it seems to me, is the real and very impassioned message behind all of Eudora Welty's criticism, and one that very few writers are in a position to transmit, because as she herself notes, story writing and critical analysis are entirely separate gifts, "like spelling and playing the flute."

The problem of criticism is that the meaning of writing is inseparable from the act of writing. There can never be a translation of a whole story into a commentary on its parts in which the story does not suffer. Welty's solution to this paradox is to treat the story as an intimate communication of feeling between just two persons—the writer and the reader, each bound to the other for the duration of the story by the moral responsibility the intimacy implies.

But whether she is writing fiction or criticism, Welty never forgets to be entertaining. She's as lively and engaging a critic as ever lived, and this is just another mark of her shrewdness. *The Eye of the Story*, which belies its occasional genesis, ought to be pressed posthaste into the hands of the young especially, for they are Eudora Welty's favorites, and also into the hands of serious readers and writers of all ages. ◉

Carole Cook is a free-lance writer and critic.

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Books in Brief

Dulles: A Biography of Eleanor, Allen, and John Foster Dulles and Their Family Network

by Leonard Mosley
Dial/James Wade, 530 pp., $12.95

Some political families thrive on public performance and elections, others, on private influence and the assignment of power. *Dulles* is the story of a family of the second kind, a family who dominated American foreign policy in the 1950s; whose taste for political authority united self-interest and morality; and whose mixed legacy haunts us still.

The three Dulles siblings (of five children) shared a lifelong devotion to diplomacy, but each expressed that devotion differently. John Foster was always the grave statesman: analytical and moralistic, possessing a shrewd sense of realpolitik and self-promotion. Allen was the adventurer: high-spirited, humane, a bon vivant and a congenital devotee of intrigue for its own sake. Eleanor was the thoroughgoing professional: Though curtailed in her diplomatic career because she was a woman, she remained hardworking, unpretentious, effective, and genuinely dedicated to advancing international equity and order.

Mosley unfolds the lives of these three gifted people and the implications of their personalities in the urgent, anecdotal manner of a novelist. There are some compelling sequences, especially those devoted to Allen's wartime cloak-and-dagger operations, but, alas, the subject deserves better than Mosley's breathless narrative. For besides plot, personality, and anecdote, politics involves ideology, and to this Mosley is blind. The cold war, in which Mosley's characters played the decisive roles of their lives, is simplistically explained here as Soviet hostility and American resistance. The Dulles family are thus cleansed of all ideological motives for their actions, a tactic that makes for a fast-paced story but not for history.

Yet, intellectual lapses aside, the book illuminates one dark passage in American political life: how Foster's untouchable authority at State protected Allen's romantic individualism at the CIA, granting the CIA a life and morality of its own and sanctioning an atmosphere of secrecy and conspiracy in government. This is the same atmosphere Allen so relished in espionage, in which "sometimes one never knows until the day of judgment who, after all, is deceiving whom."

—JAMES SLOAN ALLEN

Fifth Avenue: A *Very* Social History

by Kate Simon
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 371 pp., $12.96

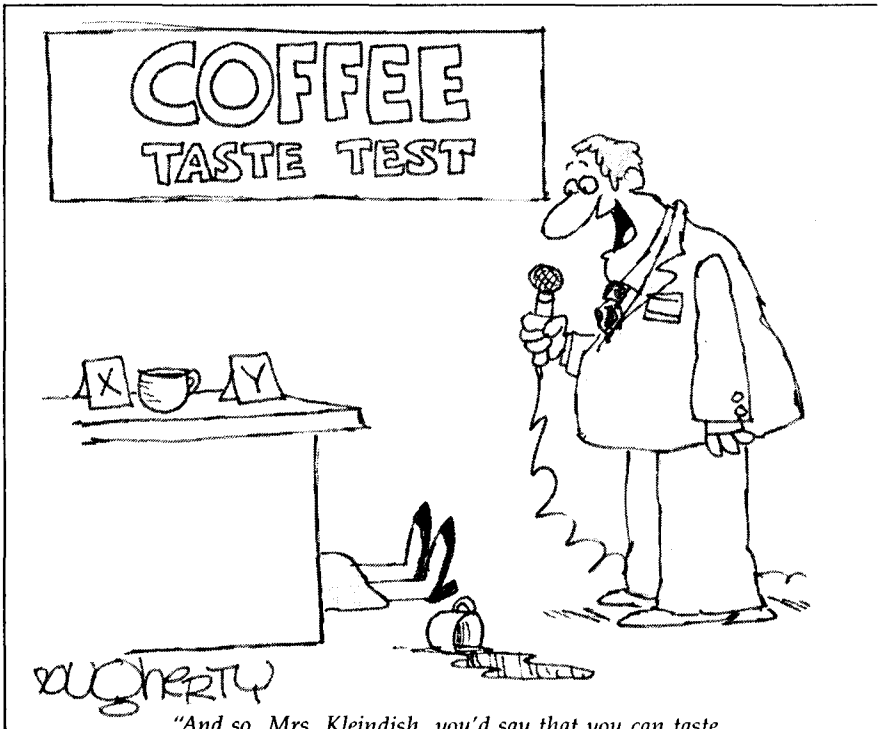
In her account of the glittering social events held at the Waldorf-Astoria around 1900, Kate Simon seems bemused by the wide-eyed curiosity seekers on the street, for whom such spectacles were "fantasies of the good life." In its own sophisticated way, however, Simon's book gawks dreamily at the same pedigreed world. Ambling up Fifth Avenue in a leisurely, neo-Proustian fashion, the author mixes elaborate architectural commentary with an unauthorized biography of nineteenth-century American nobility. The walking tour might just as well have been titled "A la recherche des maisons perdues," since many of the buildings Simon discusses have been gone as long as the various Whitneys and Astors who built them.

Furthermore, Simon's appetite for the intimate life of fashionable society—the scandalous opulence and the opulent scandals—is a little too prodigious for her own good. That Tiffany scornfully turned up its nose at Diamond Jim Brady's request for gold-plated, jewel-encrusted bicycles; that Mrs. William Kissam Vanderbilt divorced her husband and subsequently became Mrs. Oliver H. P. Belmont; that Anna Gould married a French aristocrat who proceeded to squander $11 million of her money on gambling and other women—all this may be of interest, but only to people for whom gossip is a valid form of history.

Then too, the gamiest anecdotes in the book are already well known to us from the works of John Dos Passos, E. L. Doctorow, and Stephen Birmingham, none of whom receives an acknowledgment. (The omission in Birmingham's case is particularly regrettable, since Simon's chapter on prominent Jewish American families follows *Our Crowd* as faithfully as an Irish terrier.)

The horror vacui to which Simon attributes the systematic overdecoration of so many of the buildings she describes must be contagious, for it infects her prose as well. From Washington Square all the way to Harlem, her inventory of ornate splendors continues unrelentingly in a style that is frequently corrupted by its subject. The following is typical: "The bar [was] decorated with twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of Bouguereau nymphs gamboling with satyrs and a Pan leaping with heated bacchantes in a spacious ambience of textured ceiling, cut glass, fancy pilaster and shining top hats." Densely packed and overripe, Simon's book about Fifth Avenue is an exhausting social history.

—ROBERT F. MOSS



"And so, Mrs. Kleindish, you'd say that you can taste the difference."

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FINE PRINT

Perfect Pitch in Albany

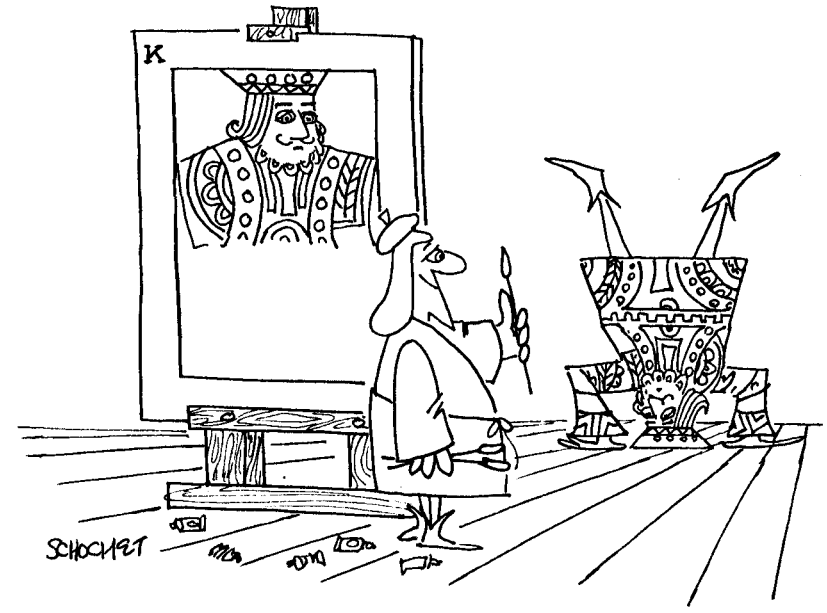
by Doris Grumbach

I ONCE LIVED in or around Albany, New York, for a stretch of almost 20 years. I thought I knew something about its history; its geography; its heavily Irish Catholic population; its patriarchal, dictatorial, and benevolent Democratic political machine, run, until his recent death, by Uncle Dan O'Connell. But after reading William Kennedy's exciting, mad, rich new novel, *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game* (Viking, $8.95), I realize that I hardly knew the old place at all.

Kennedy is a born-and-bred patriot of Albany. He knows more about his special Hibernian turf than anyone else. He knows every bar, hotel, store, bowling alley, pool hall, and whorehouse that ever opened in North Albany. He knows where the Irish had their picnics and parties—and what went on at them; where their churches were; where they bet on horses, played the numbers, and gathered for poker. He can re-create with absolute accuracy the city room conversations at the Albany *Times-Union*, where his hero, Martin Daugherty, works (and where Kennedy once worked and found the material for his first novel, *The Ink Truck*, about an Albany Newspaper Guild strike).

Most important for this new book, Kennedy's pitch is perfect. His is the true comic spirit, conveyed by a tumult of fierce and wonderful language. Conversations in places frequented by his bookies and gamblers and politicians are quick-witted and often filled with unsavory, irreverent street talk and with brawling, wise guy, barroom argot. Kennedy is the unquestioned authority on the dialogue in the State Street bowling alley on that momentous night in 1938 when Billy Phelan rolls 299 against champion Scotty Strech (who "lived with his bowling ball as if it were a third testicle"). At the end of the game, Scotty falls dead. "Holy Mother of God, that was a quick decision," says Charlie McCall, an onlooker who is "the most powerful young man in town."

Charlie's subsequent kidnapping is the novel's main event. Politically and socially, the McCall family rules the city, determining the present and future of its population. Rescuing Charlie takes some days, during which minor events play themselves out. An entire *Decameron* of anecdotes, memories, and details of small lives enriches the narrative, so by the time Charlie is back home, we too are authorities on the corrupt politics and on the life of the bum; the small-time bookie; the call girl; Martin's old father and young, priesthood-bound son; Melissa (mistress at the same time of Martin and his father) doing a play in town; Billy's long-absent father; and Billy's lady friend, Angie, who wants to marry Billy and tries to pull a neat trick on him. To these, add a few non-Irish characters like Ben Berman, who was the city's best tailor; his son, Jake, the liberal lawyer who tries to run against the McCall machine; and Jake's son, Morrie, the black sheep in whom "the worthy Berman family strain had gone slightly askew."



Kennedy works them all into a rich gallimaufry, seasoned by his own unsavory language. The meat in this Irish stew is fathers, sons, uncles, and grandfathers, for Albany's Irish society is heavy on the male side and its activities take place in men-only sanctums. The other sex is present, in bed or at home, but women are usually on the minds of these men only when everything else fails or closes.

Kennedy's affection for the goings-on in Albany during the Twenties and Thirties was first manifest in *Legs*, a book he wrote a few years ago about Jack Diamond. "He [was] not merely the dude of all gangsters, the most active brain in the New York underworld, but ... one of the truly new American Irishmen of his day: Horatio Alger out of Finn McCool and Jesse James ... a pioneer, the founder of the first truly modern gang, the dauphin of the town for years." The same rolling prose and informed anecdote that distinguished Kennedy's first-rate, fictionalized account of Legs Diamond are present in his depiction of the McCall gang and its friends and enemies—those who make up the close and closed society of Colonie Street: "They all clustered together ... to live among their own kind, and the solidarity became an obvious political asset." Fighting, challenging, and defending one another, profoundly Irish and equally profoundly American, the cast of *Billy Phelan* is, quite simply, a wonder—a magical bunch of thugs, lovers, and game players. No one writing in America today (I say this with assurance, being prepared at the same time for contradiction from some quarter or other) has Kennedy's rich and fertile gift of gab; his pure, verbal energy; his love of people, and their kith and kin. Like his characters, he too is a wonder. ◉

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TRADE WINDS

by William Cole

Belongs in Every Collection

In my opinion, the great poets of this century are Yeats, Eliot, Frost, Lawrence, and Hardy (in any order, providing that Yeats comes first). My edition of Hardy's collected was printed in 1961—the ninth printing—and the type is small, worn, and generally unattractive. Now, however, Macmillan's new Wessex edition brings us *The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy*, completely reset, 1,040 pages, with some previously uncollected poems. It is a handsome book, sells for $20.95, and belongs in every poetry collection. Hardy was a quirky poet; he did things his own way, using some unfamiliar words and idiosyncratic construction. Here's a little poem, "Waiting Both," that I've always enjoyed:

A star looks down at me,
And says: "Here I and you
Stand, each in our degree:
What do you mean to do,—
Mean to do?"

I say: "For all I know,
Wait, and let Time go by,
Till my change come,"—"Just so."
The star says: "So mean I:—
So mean I."

Nat and Ned

Nat Shapiro has been around the music scene for many years, and in his *An Encyclopedia of Quotations About Music* (Doubleday, $10), he knows whereof he quotes. Short spurts of brilliance of every kind, on every make of music from Vivaldi to Cage, by such worthies as Shaw, Mencken, Berlioz, Ernest Newman, Thomas Beecham. There's one by Sydney Smith—"The Smith of Smiths"—with which I heartily agree: "If I were to begin life again, I would devote it to music. It is the only cheap and unpunished rapture on earth." I noted 15 quotations from Ned Rorem, whose diaries I've always happily devoured—which brings me to his *An Absolute Gift: A New Diary* (Simon & Schuster, $9.95). It isn't really a diary (let's have more of those, please) but collected pieces, mostly on music, with side forays into movies, theater, homosexuality, and English usage. Concerning the latter, he has a solution to the vexing "Ms." problem: "Why not eliminate Ms., along with Mrs. and Mr. and Master and Miss, and call everyone, as Quakers do, by both names?" He includes one musical quote that Nat Shapiro missed—one that I've been dining out on for weeks. When Ravel was asked about his "Boléro," he replied, "It's my masterpiece. Unfortunately, it contains no music."

The Alternate Publishers' Best

Who can keep up with all of America's little magazines and small presses? Nobody, that's who. But in Bill Henderson's Pushcart Press books—the latest of which is *Pushcart Prize III: Best of the Small Presses* (1978-1979 edition)—you can get the material that a group of literary experts considers the year's best. For *Pushcart Prize III*, more than 2,000 small presses nominated what they considered their best publications, and a board of 83 editors sifted through and made their recommendations. So in 580 pages we have 70 selections of fiction, poetry, and essays. Three of the selections were voted "outstanding"—an essay by John Gardner; a poem by Leslie Marmon Silko; and a story, "Rough Strife" (which originally appeared in *Ontario Review* and was exclaimed over in this column a few issues ago), by Lynne Sharon Schwartz. You can get the new *Pushcart Prize III* at major bookstores or order it direct for $15 from The Pushcart Press, P. O. Box 845, Yonkers, New York 10701.

Wit Twister No. 117

Edited by Arthur Swan

The object of the game is to complete the poem by thinking of one word whose letters, when rearranged, will yield the appropriate word for each series of blanks. Each dash within a blank corresponds to a letter of the word. Answers on page 52.

Our thermostat's — — — — — to low this year,
Since heating fuel is both scarce and dear;
And though we cut some — — — — — for firewood,
A — — — — — is soon used up. Some chemist should
Distill a low-cost — — — — — we could burn
Instead of oil or wood. From me he'd earn
A thank-you, — — — — — but heartfelt, since he might
Thus — — — — — us through our present power plight.

Contributed by Elizabeth Doughty, Wilmette, Ill.

Ycleptomania (finished)

My, but some people have funny names! We got 600 postcards and letters in response to John Train's *Remarkable Names of Real People* contest, and he's now selected the winners. Readers who sent in the following will get free autographed books: Pothuvilage Babyhamy, Professor J. C. Beaglehole, Clarence O. Bedient, Iduma Best, Peter Beter, the Misses Comfort and Satisfy Bottom, John Hodge Opera House Centennial Gargling Oil Samuel J. Tilden Ten Brook, Ginger Screws Casanova, Bacon Chow, Nancy Ann Cianci, Fairy Clutter, Iza Coon, Casual Cox, Dr. Dement (psychiatrist), Veniamin Dymshits, E. Pluribus Eubanks, Never Fail (a builder), Novice Fawcett, Safety First (a doctor), Felonius Fish, Dr. Gargle (a dentist), Agonia Heimerdinger, Lobelia Rugtwit Hildebiddle, Fanny Hunnybun, Lesbia Lobo, Vula Malooley, Eloda Maneure, Chicago Six-and-Seven-Eighths McFadden, Serious Misconduct, Judith Moist, Void Null, Lacey Pantti, Dr. Carl J. Paternite (obstetrician), Aida Quattlebaum, Bubby and Money Raspberry, Leif Roar (opera singer), Urban Shocker, Miss Fishy Step, John Wellborn Wallop (polo player), Medley G. B. Whelpley, Ursula Woop, and—get ready—Abderazzaq S. Abdeulhafafeeth. And one, from the Rochester, New York, phone book, that would be unseemly to print here. Can anybody supply authentication for these?: Phoebe B. Beebe (Peabody?), Ophelia Bumps, Odious Champagne, Mrs. A. Gross Fibber, Hedda Hair, Purdy Outhouse, Lettuce Prey, Rosie Rump, Oldmouse Waltz. They're winners if they can be verified. In the words of a great American, "Goodnight, Mrs. Calabash, wherever you are." ◉

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AN ISLAND THEY CALL PARADISE

by Horace Sutton

Loews villas on the sands at Nassau's Paradise Beach—"A dreadnought of pleasure anchored off Rawson Square."

BACK WHEN it was the retreat of millionaires and could only be reached by ferry, the palmy atoll that stretches languidly in the sea opposite the town of Nassau endured under the opprobrious name of Hog Island. It sheltered the crusty Porcupine Club, whose members and whose staff were pledged to secrecy. The membership list was classified, as was the manner in which members comported themselves. These matters were left to the musings of the world outside, although in fact the Porcupine people, hardly being parvenus, did little more than take the sun on the powder-sand beach and play tennis on the private courts. Only one day a year, on Washington's Birthday, when the members gathered for the annual ball, was the club ever open after teatime.

In the years following World War II, Axel Wenner Gren, a Swedish industrialist, bought patches of Hog Island and built elaborate canals so that his private navy could reach open water without cruising around the entire island. The change came at the end of the Fifties, when Huntington Hartford, the A&P heir, arrived and found Hog Island so handy to Nassau (and thus to northern climes), so handsome to behold, that he bought the Wenner Gren property, changed Hog Island to Paradise Island, and built a 50-room elegant retreat called the Ocean Club. A dabbler in art, Hartford bought a French cloister, which had been imported by the Hearsts, and had it set up as the *pièce d'importance* of a formal greenery called the Versailles Gardens. It stretches Louis quatorze style from the Ocean Club near the beach clear to the south shore.

Hartford developed a snug harbor for yachts called Hurricane Hole and planted an elaborate restaurant named Café Martinique down near the water. With its velvet banquettes and potted palms, it gave off waves of Maxim's. A restaurant called Mermaid's Tavern opened at the other side of the water, on the Nassau shore, assumedly for the convenience of ferry passengers. Ultimately, a toll bridge went up, and in due course, when Hartford had wearied of his *folie*, came the high rise hotels and the casino.

Today, Paradise Island is a dreadnought of pleasure anchored off Rawson Square, a golf course at one end and a Holiday Inn at the other. A causeway runs to Potter's Cay, and from there a spindly bridge arches across the channel like a praying mantis, leading directly to the casino, the lodestone that attracts the high rollers, who in their chartered planes fly toward the promise of instant riches. On either side, the casino is flanked by the parenthesis of hotels—the Britannia Beach, whose top floor was once the lair of the late Howard Hughes; and Loews Paradise Island Hotel and Villas, with its expanse of tennis courts, its trifurcated high rise, and its fringe of white beach. The two connect by passageway with the casino and, as well, with four restaurants placed within a central rotunda—the Villa d'Este, with its implications of that gem on faraway Lake Como and its Italianate menu offering *scaloppine alla francese* and *broccoli con salsa olandese*; the Bahamian Club, invoking the name of that old Nassau gaming parlor where in ritzier days the gamblers were required to dress formally to gain entrance (a surrey driver passing the old Nassau club one day some years back assured me, "You loses your money for-*mal*"—native accent on the last syllable); the Brauhaus, which promises to be a bierstube but in fact disgorges hamburgers and bagels paved with Nova and cream cheese; finally, there is Coyaba, done up in Trader Vic trappings, dispensing stir-fried standards of the Cantonese cuisine.

Down near Hurricane Hole, the isolated Flagler Inn is a modest high rise that draws Europeans in search of the tropics. Hartford's old Ocean Club, with 71 rooms and 9 tennis courts, ap-

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pears the most refined of all, its ocean-side suites billed at $150 a day from now until peak season in mid-December. Still, two sojourners could be installed there in a gardenside room without a patio and make do at $56 a day (room only) or, in even more Spartan digs, put up in a tennis cabana at $40 a day, $20 a day cheaper than the same quarters in winter.

WITHAL, the most interesting installation on Paradise Island is the seventy-sixth outpost of Club Mediterranee, which opened for business in December. The spread embraces 22 acres near the end of the island, running from the south shore, across from Nassau harbor, to Paradise Beach on the north shore. That prized tract takes in the old Porcupine Club and the grounds of two handsome estates: Harbourside, which was the home of Olive, Lady Baillie, who was an American Whitney; and Grayleath, the onetime residence of Mrs. I. W. Killam.

The grounds of both estates meld into each other and form broad flatlands planted with palms, hibiscuses, crotons, fountains of pandanus, cabbage palms, and other assorted greenery. The heated, Olympic-size pool, which the Killams built 20 years ago at a reputed cost of $1 million, remains secluded in a nest of landscaped adornments, shaded by an enormous silk-cotton tree. Stone hounds guard the entranceway from the flagstone apron, and water burbles from the open mouths of stone dolphins. It is a setting that seems to await the imminent arrival of Jay Gatsby.

Club Med uses the mansion itself as its specialty restaurant, where 80 *gentils membres* (GMs), as Club Med's clientele is called, can dine nightly, apart from the crowds who assemble in a 600-seat dining room fashioned from the old Porcupine Club. The other part of Grayleath functions as a discotheque that opens at midnight and spins records until the last customer says good night. The club has set aside the lawn between the manor house and the sea for its afternoon ritual of classical music played in the open air. It is a circumstance of evolution that Graycliff, the Killam's winter home in Nassau, has become that city's most elegant restaurant.

Long, low-lying buildings have been constructed on the grounds of the estate to house the members. The quarters are compact but modern and utilitarian if one is of modest avoirdupois. Each room has a bath and shower and two beds. In the club tradition, no keys are supplied. One is directed to put valuables in the safe, wear a string of beads—known in the club argot as a *collier* bar—that serve as currency for drinks purchased at the saloon, a pub *en plein air* that functions as a sort of village square and soda shop.

The truth is that there is so much going on at the club, the rooms have little purpose aside from providing quarters for sleeping, making one's toilette, and dressing for dinner. In keeping with club style, an enormous opensided clubhouse has been built encompassing the multisided bar, a large amphitheater, and a stage equipped with an elaborate system for lights, music amplification, and special effects that could service a show at the

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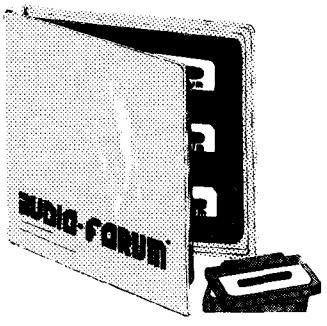

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Folies-Bergères.

Breakfast stuns the first-time arrival. A dazzling display of dishes are laid out—perhaps a hundred or more—stewed fruits, a cornucopia of fresh tropical fruits, custards, baked apples, dried raisins, an alpine range of yogurt, cold cereals, croissants and Danish pastries, breads, cheeses from France, pâtés and terrines, salamis, mortadella, eggs in assorted fashions, and a haystack of bacon.

At lunch it starts all over again with a bulging buffet always embellished with a large fish—usually wahoo—poached and served cold. Lamb chops, fresh fish, small steaks, and sausages sizzle on a charcoal grill attended by Bahamian chefs delighted to banter with you in their newly learned French. Wine is at the table in pitchers.

The captains of industry who inhabited these quarters as Porcupiners might be interested to learn that the original club dining room has been artfully divided into louvered salons, each holding several tables for eight. The *gentils membres* are set down where chairs are available, and so one meets, as I did in the course of a few days, a French publisher and his bride; a BOCES teacher and his wife; a Long Island matron with her teen-age offspring; an Iowa industrialist; a Quebec jewelry-store owner; assorted social studies teachers from American high schools; a Toronto businessman; and the operator of a clothing-store chain in Montreal.

It is this mélange that assembles in the morning for *la gymnastique* (calesthenics), yoga, *plongée libre* (snorkeling), *pétanque* (bocce ball), and that newest fancy, *planche à voile* (wind surfing). But this club's biggest athletic attraction is a huge tennis installation—20 courts, all Har-True, all available on a first-come, first-served basis. Ball machines and TV filming and instruction are all on call. There is no extra charge for any sportive endeavor, save for golf (on the grounds of the Paradise Country Club) and deep-sea fishing—they call it *pêche à gros* (the charter boat leaves right from the dock alongside the clubhouse and often comes back with dolphin, wahoo, and fat tuna).

Before a week is gone, a certain camaraderie seems to have knit the whole cantonment in an air of pleasurable abandon that might be viewed as puerile if it was not so downright agreeable. There is the sheer ingenue gaiety of the nightly shows, the gags and games that seem to be lighted one from the other. Sleepy arrivals at breakfast one morning come upon a lidded tureen, a ladle set invitingly alongside. One lifts the lid to contemplate a woolly black head seemingly disembodied, yet one eye looks up to wink. Screams shatter the morning stillness, then laughter. At the gala dinner, champagne corks explode, the brass band marches between the tables, and the bass player—no marcher—is pulled through on a dolly. He is wearing a tailcoat, Bermuda shorts, and a black telephone receiver for a bow tie. High camp is not considered low comedy.

By week's end, it is time for the descent into the cold reaches of reality. Even the farewell is draped in the bunting of drama. An assortment of mix-and-match ferries is drawn up at the dock to transport the *gentils membres* across the harbor, then to waiting airplanes that will carry them back to schoolrooms, boardrooms, operating rooms; to farms, cities, and countries on two continents. The stereo system in the control booth high above the stage plays the Club Med national anthem:

> ... it's a paradise beside a tropic bay.
> ... where you wake up with the sun,
> Where you laugh when day is done.
> ... you may go to Martinique,
> Tahiti is fantastique, but you find my
> island is the most unique...

Arms wave on shore, and on the boats a score of hands respond. Lips are mouthing the words of the song, and some folks on shore are doing the hand movements that go with the lyrics. Eyes are damp. It is an E. M. Forster departure from India. Slowly the boats eddy into the channel. On the open stage of the theater, other bodies move to different rhythms. They are rehearsing for next week's show. A new contingent of GMs, plebes from the northlands, will arrive with the late afternoon plane. ◉

Saying sayonara at Club Med—"Even the farewell is draped in the bunting of drama. Arms wave. Eyes are damp."

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OH, CUISINE!

A Touch of Israel in Rome

by Anthony Burgess

ONLY EUROPEAN Communists are said to know the best European restaurants. Reactionaries like me eat at home or in snack bars or, at best, in such Paris hash joints as the Self Grill, which sounds as if it ought to be owned by Saint Laurent—sorry, Saint Lawrence. But I found one of the great restaurants of Europe in the Roman Jewish quarter when I was researching a certain historic case of incest.

In the Roman ghetto (note: in Italy *ghetto* has properly no connotation of cramped ostracism; it is merely a truncation of *borghetto*, or "little town") stands a little square called Monte Cenci, on the site of the Circus built by Gaius Flaminius in 220 B.C. The Cenci family lived here until they virtually wiped themselves out toward the end of the sixteenth century. The notorious Francesco Cenci fell in love with his daughter, Beatrice—or so she claimed. His alleged gross demands on her person resulted in his murder at the hands of bravos hired by the lovely Beatrice, her two brothers, and her mother. Beatrice was executed for the crime, and the name Cenci left the records of the living and entered myth—as detailed, for instance, in the little-performed tragedy *The Cenci*, by Mrs. Shelley's husband. The Palazzo Cenci now houses someone unglamorous but unincestuous; the chapel facing has long since been deconsecrated. Shedding cheerfulness on the grim *piazzetta* is the Piperno a Monte Cenci. Piperno is a Jewish name; this is a Jewish restaurant. Mario Piperno, its founder, is long dead, and today the restaurant is in the possession of the Mazzarella family.

The Roman Jews have never known religious persecution from Romans. When Mussolini got at them it was chiefly because they were socialists and intellectuals, and the Nazis were, of course, of a pasta totally diverse, to use an Italian idiom. The Roman Jew speaks Roman, not Yiddish or Ladino, and regards the Roman Christian as a kind of younger brother. Roman Jews visit Tel Aviv and Jerusalem but are glad to get back to their native city. They have little against the pope, since he is a sort of Roman, but they will not accept Jesus Christ, who never came near the place. Their cuisine is essentially Roman, but there is one dish—the speciality of the ristorante Piperno—that they call Jewish.

In 1909 Romeo Marchetti, editor of *Il Pupazzetto*, a satirical magazine, established at the Piperno the custom of holding an annual "artichoke dinner"—a custom that lasted until his death in 1962. The dinner was held in spring and was regarded as a ritual greeting the return of the blessed season. Toasts were made; the finest items of the Roman cuisine were consumed. The crown of the feast was *carciofi alla giudea*—artichokes cooked in the Jewish manner. This dish is still Piperno's pride. The artichokes come from the Roman Campagna; they are round, fleshy, and tender. After being plunged into seething oil, they emerge looking like chrysanthemums, aromatic, full of the delicate gust of spring itself.

I was last at ristorante Piperno—horror of Orthodox horrors—at Yom Kippur in 1977 and found things in full swing: gilt, mirrors, light streaming in on the piled crustaceans and globe artichokes, no incrustations of signed photographs or ancient heirlooms of the house. The padrone, Mazzarella, was affable but not effusive. He had reserved a place for my car in the Cenci shadows; an old man in a peaked cap prowled the car park devotedly. Cleanliness, light, order, efficiency. I ate the following:

A mixed antipasto of fresh shellfish, then *zuppa di verdura*. The Anglo-Saxon notion of a vegetable soup is dishwater smelling of cabbage, but the Piperno's *zuppa* is a meal in itself, eaten with fresh, crusty Roman bread—a rich, thick agglomeration of all the greens available in the Italian early autumn. Then I sampled various pasta dishes—fettucine with an aromatic meat sauce; spaghetti with tiny fresh clams; ravioli with creamy ricotta, that delicate curd dish found all over Italy. My main course was *spiedino di mazzancolle*—spit-roasted estuary prawns—with a *contorno* of exquisitely sauced mushrooms, or *funghi porcini*. I also sampled my companion's stewed oxtail and *merluzzo di paranza*—literally, netted codling. And of course there were the *carciofi alla giudea*. Now room had to be found for the dessert specialty. Take a breath before I name it.

It is called *le palle di nonno fritte*, a name that enshrines a notion perhaps cruder than that of Montana's son of a bitch stew but which is, unlike that American offering, redeemed by the refined delicacy of the dish itself: a flaky pastry filled with cream and homemade plum preserves, all of which is dropped into boiling fat for an instant, tnen served very hot.

The wines are not the most distinguished in the world, but Rome does not go in for the wine snobbery of Paris. We drank a fine cold Pinot Grigio from the Venetian hinterland and a Trieste Bianco that James Joyce would have relished, terming it—in allusion to its color only—*orina divina*, or divine urine. The Italian, and French, habit of drinking a good mineral water with the meal—since wine is for taste, not thirst—is a healthful one. We drank the best *acqua minerale* that Rome affords—an Etruscan one from Nepi—but all Roman waters are good. The American superstition of avoiding tap water in Italy continues, but such water is mostly only spring water unbottled. You can get a fine clear glassful at the Piperno, but I prefer something that brings up the wind.

The waiters are efficient, knowledgeable, and if you wish them to be, friendly. Since my last experience in America, I prefer to keep my waiters at a distance. I went into the dining room of the William Penn in Pittsburgh and sat down at a table. An aged waiter ambled toward me, sat down opposite with a creak of tired bones, then said, "What can I get you, my friend?" None of that here. Don't just stroll into the Piperno. It's not large. It has only three or four small outdoor tables in fine weather; though the interior is sufficiently, if not excessively, roomy, it's still wise to reserve a table. The telephone number is 65-0629. *Buon appetito.* ◉

Answer to Middleton Double-Crostic No. 145

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EDITORIAL: WHO OWNS BRAZIL'S JUNGLE?

BRAZIL IS CUTTING large swaths through its jungle for five automobile superhighways and for industrial development.

On its surface, the project would appear to be of interest only to Brazilians. But the world's people have a stake in Amazonia, as the jungle area is known, for it is the largest and richest rain forest in the world. Indeed, Brazil's rain forest has been called "the lungs of the earth." It is the greatest single source of oxygen, other than the oceans, in the Western Hemisphere.

The government of Brazil disputes the charge that the superhighways and industrial development of Amazonia will have an adverse effect on the world's oxygen supply. It calls attention to the fact that experts disagree about the significance of oxygen loss resulting from the millions of acres being covered over by asphalt and cement. But the weakness of Brazil's argument is that many of the same experts are convinced it is essential to seek a scientific answer before the Amazonia project passes the point of no return.

Another point on which many experts agree is that the disruption of the oxygen-carbon-dioxide cycle in Amazonia could result in a world temperature increase of several degrees. If this should happen, melted ice from the polar regions would raise the water level of the oceans, putting many coastal cities in jeopardy.

Brazil has resisted all efforts to persuade it to file an environmental impact statement with the United Nations before proceeding with the destruction of the rain forest. Even without such an official study, enough scientific data has been collected and published to serve as the basis for valid concern. Perhaps the most valuable of such studies is the book *Amazon Jungle: Green Hell to Red Desert?* by R.J.A. Goodland and H. R. Irwin. The material contained in this study serves as a compelling bill of particulars on the folly of Brazil's present course.

Harald Sioli, Director of the Max Planck Institute of Limnology, in Germany, has written an introduction to the book, in which he "joins in the desperate supplication of the authors to save Amazonia and the last surviving aboriginal cultures in it. For what? For the future of colorful, captivating life forms on our beautiful planet, which are the truest wealth we have and which we must never sacrifice for the momentary and trivial benefit of our materialistic civilization." He emphasizes that Amazonia is filled with a variety of animal and plant life unmatched anywhere else in the world.

Brazil's policy is not unnatural in the context of the behavior of sovereign states throughout history. Few countries have set aside their national interest because of outside protests on real or theoretical grounds. Obviously, the Brazilian government feels it should not be expected to demonstrate the kind of world conscience that has been conspicuously absent in the policies of major countries that have already achieved a high level of industrialization. Brazil doesn't enjoy being condemned for actions that have always been standard operating procedure in the history of its northern neighbors.

Yet the historical record of other nations in carrying out predatory assaults on the environment doesn't change the fact that the world today, largely as a result of those policies, is fast exhausting its margin for ecological error. The human race has been on an anti-environmental binge since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. At some point, the assault on the world's life-support system will have to come to a halt. National determination is not the highest value. Life is.

Only if tribalism is regarded as more important than civilization can Brazil's defiance of the human interest be comprehensible. But in a world geographic community, tribalism can become a torch. It is difficult, therefore, to condone Brazil's actions because of the accident of geography that placed a vital world resource within its authority. The role of the rain forest in the natural economy of the earth makes it logical for the world's peoples to have representation. The national government is an intermediate institution and should not set aside the ultimate rights of human beings outside its own boundaries.

Obviously, the conflict between the national interest and the human interest is not confined to the issue of the rain forests. It is manifested every time France or the People's Republic of China, or any other nation, explodes a nuclear bomb in the atmosphere, exposing lands everywhere to radioactive fallout. It is manifested every time Japan or the United States or the Soviet Union or Germany or other nations use the inland waterways or the seas as a dumping ground for vast quantities of poisonous waste chemicals. It is manifested with every predatory assault on whales or other creatures. It is manifested every time that tankers ditch their oil or that drilling operations result in vast spills.

Even worse than the fact of these degradations is the absence of the means to stop them. Indeed, the very resistance to the establishment of effective machinery for protecting the earth comes close to being the world's number-one problem.

President Jimmy Carter, to his great credit, has signed a congressional resolution directing the United States to attempt to strengthen and improve the United Nations. The President has given his complete support to this resolution, declaring that the successful management of the main problems confronting the world is "beyond the reach of the individual nation-state, no matter how powerful economically or militarily it might be." The President also stated that "a central concern of our foreign policy in the remaining years of this century must be the building of a more effective U.N. system. To this end, this administration is committed to working for a stronger and more effective United Nations."

Whether with respect to the rain forests of the world, or the explosion of nuclear weapons, or the assaults on the environment, or the diversion of the world's resources into the arms race, the clear need today is for the development of an effective and workable world order. The President needs to know that the American people are behind him in this respect. —N.C.

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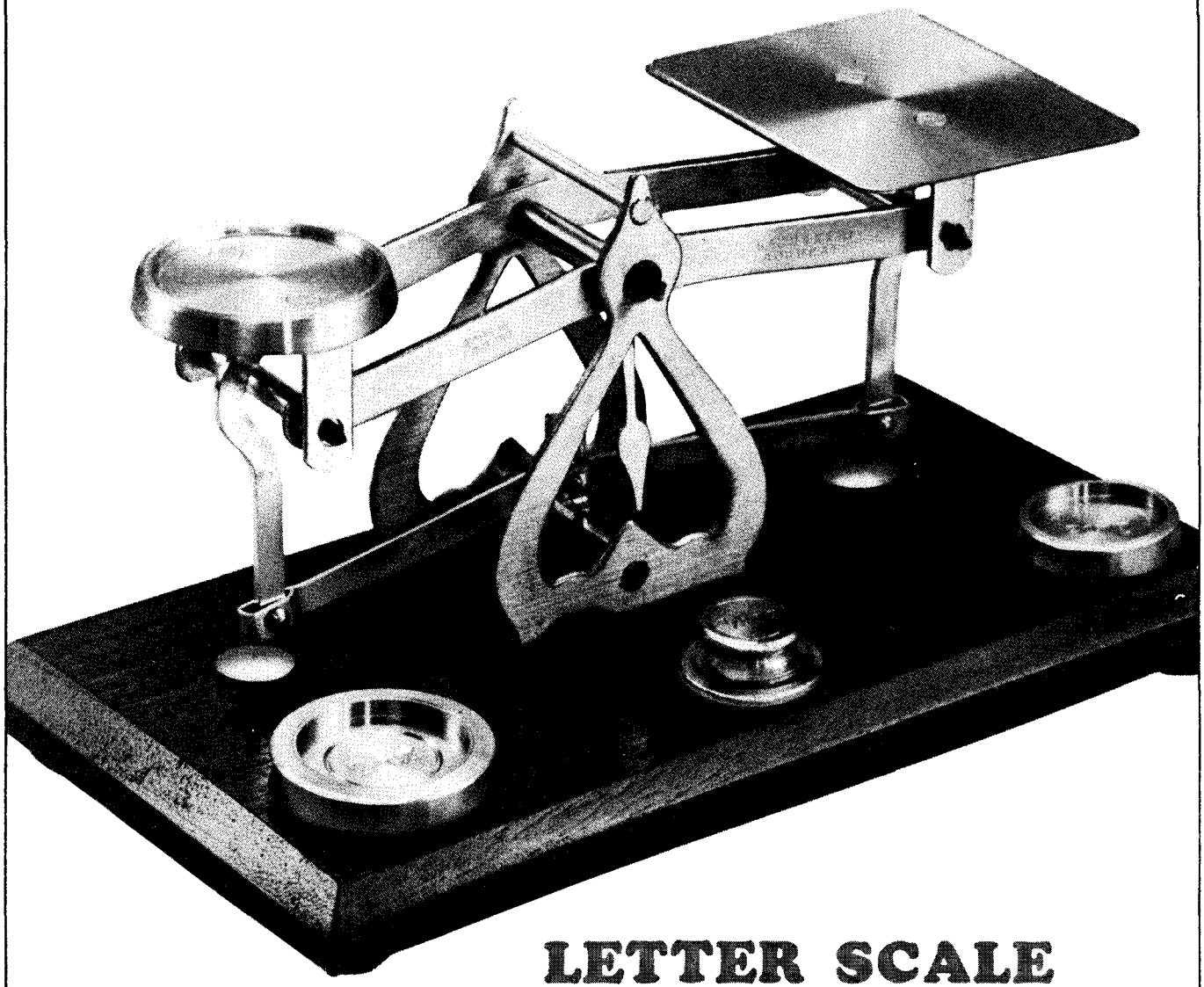

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LIGHT REFRACTIONS

How Not to Phrase an Assignment

by Thomas H. Middleton

A FEW WEEKS AGO, I mentioned Richard Mitchell and his *The Underground Grammarian*, the superb little paper he writes, edits, and prints and for which he is, officially, assistant circulation manager.

Mitchell comes to the defense of the English language by publishing the output of academics whose writing is garbage and by frequently revealing their salaries as well.

I pledged to follow suit. While I believe that the vast majority of English teachers are conscientious and hardworking and that a somewhat smaller majority are not only conscientious and hardworking but also effective, there are still too many who are taking their paycheck under false pretenses as they inflict severe damage upon the minds of the young people entrusted to their tutelage.

A parent of a high school student recently wrote to me, quoting one of the assignments given to his child:

Re: *The Catcher in the Rye.* HOMEWORK—One-page composition: It is quite obvious that Holden Caulfield is a distinctive protagonist. Explain the intrinsic ramification of Holden's mass appeal and identification to adolescent and young adult readers.

"In his effort to encourage students to learn new words," the parent wrote, "[the teacher] confuses, disorients, and irritates his students by a profuse and constant use of words they don't understand. He fires so many ambiguous notes and questions that the students are left with an understandable tension and frustration about their work. This guy appears to be a threat to the learning of English."

I've left this teacher anonymous, since I know no more about him than what my correspondent reveals in his letter. Let's call him Mr. Groby, after Thurber's notorious Miss Groby.

It is probably a safe bet that Groby is conscientious and hardworking but that he is a victim of the sort of schooling that Mitchell and, I hope, you deplore.

How would you handle the assignment Groby posed?

Intrinsic means "innate," "native," "inherent"; among the definitions *Webster's New International, Third Edition* (*WNI III*) gives for *ramification* are "outgrowth" and "consequence."

Now, how about Holden Caulfield? What might the intrinsic ramification of his "mass appeal and identification to adolescent and young adult readers" be?

First, we must understand the assignment. "It is quite obvious that Holden Caulfield is a distinctive protagonist." If, as high school students, we're not sure what a protagonist is, we look it up and find that it is "the chief character of a novel or story in or around whom the action centers" (*WNI III*). How about *distinctive*? *WNI III* says, "characteristic," "peculiar," and "special." That's what Holden Caulfield is, all right. Quite obviously.

We accept the fact—easily enough—that Holden appeals to adolescents and to young adults and that many of them identify with him. Now we must decide what the intrinsic ramification of that fact is.

All right; what is the consequence inherent in Holden's mass appeal? I don't know, unless it's that the young people would begin to talk and act like Holden. But since the *reason* for the "mass appeal and identification" is that Holden is already so prototypical of the young people, we are reeling around in a dizzying circularity.

I don't know. Perhaps Groby's brighter pupils did know, but knowing wasn't enough. They were asked to "*explain* the intrinsic ramification."

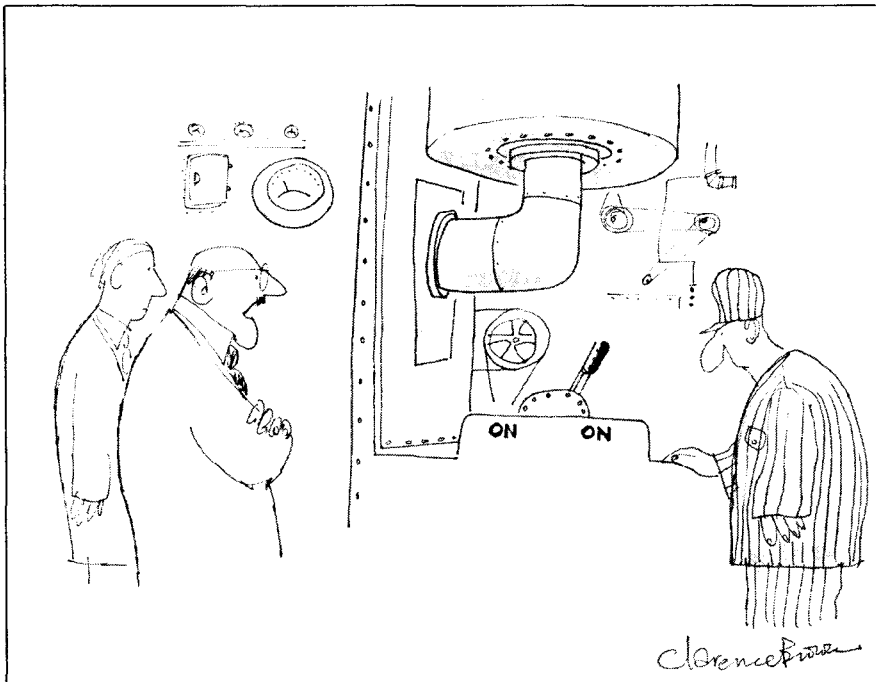
Frankly, I can't blame any high school student who, having deciphered that assignment and discovered what it meant, simply set down the translation and let it go at that.

I've asked a few friends what they thought Groby meant. The consensus is that he probably meant "Explain Holden Caulfield's mass appeal to young readers" but that he garbled it.

I have a strong feeling that Groby is a young man—probably under thirty-five—that he really cares, and that he has a master's degree from one of those schools of education where great value is placed on the number of words in a sentence and on the number of syllables in the words and where the meaning conveyed by those long words and long sentences is about as important as the collar size and sleeve length of the writer.

I devoutly hope that Groby will buy Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* and take some of its precepts to heart.

One thing is certain: Groby will be a better teacher if he makes it easier for his pupils to know what he's talking about. ◉



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TOP OF MY HEAD

The New Person

by Goodman Ace

A MAN WRITES: "I have read *SR* for many years because it has kept me fully informed. I wish I could say the same for your strange columns, in which I can never find the point you are trying to make, if indeed you had a point to start with."

Well, sir, I can take friendly criticism like that as well as the next nervously insecure columnist—with a grain of aspirin. The irony is that as a writer I have always been in the forefront of the crusade to keep the reader fully informed. In fact, if I were a newspaper, my masthead would proudly proclaim: A FULLY INFORMED READER IS A FULLY INFORMED READER.

So, under that high-flying banner, from this moment on and continuing consecutively at least to my next column, I will attempt to fully inform you, sir. No sweat. Easy as splitting that infinitive. If it's full information you want, sir, today you've come to the right window.

However, before I get into that, I hope you will agree with me that all columnists can't be Russell Baker. The more garrulous of us eventually settle for being Russell Long. Quite often, halfway through writing a column, I find I have used up the full font of my full information and must filibuster my way through the rest of my space.

Not anymore. Today you will find me a changed man—even more changed than Jimmy Carter (President of the United States... of America). Full enough? No? All right, let's pick a subject. For instance, "Books." Have you wondered how come so many books have been written in prison lately? I'm glad you asked me. Answer: For openers, writing books in prison serves one good purpose. It shuts up a lot of nonwriters who go around saying, "The story of my life would make a great book, if only I had the time to write it." The solution: "Commit a crime and some judge will give you the time" (joke).

But seriously, folks, you too, sir, writing books in prison is not a recent gambit. The author I recall most clearly and fondly was jailed at the turn of the century. He was one of my all-time favorites. His name was Bill Porter. Who he? Okay. To inform you more fully, his full name was William Sydney Porter. Ring a bell? You don't hear anything? I press on. He was born in 1862, in Greensboro, N.C. (North Carolina). As a young man he wandered around, working at several odd jobs until, in 1884, he got a job as a bank teller in Austin, Tex. (Texas).

I hope, sir, you're paying close attention, because I'm reading all of this from a very heavy book in my lap. It says here that a shortage in the bank's funds was discovered and that Bill Porter was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison—from 1898 to 1901—where he began writing short stories, each of which had a surprise ending. He didn't write under his own name. He used a nom de plume (French. Translation: "name of the pen"). He started writing in the penitentiary, hence the derivative, "pen name."

Still not full enough? Okay, here's one last clue I hoped I wouldn't have to use. Porter came to New York in 1902 and became so popular they named a candy bar after him. Now, if there are still some readers who haven't guessed his pen name, you will never hear it from me or see it in this column. I'm sorry. No, I'm not. This big book in my lap is getting so heavy it may injure me permanently.

On a footnote of comfort for Mr. Porter's fans, I should add that he was later exonerated—no cash shortage. This miscarriage of justice was committed by what was then known as a "hanging judge," who allowed a defendant to plead guilty or innocent. Period. That was justice at the turn of the century. Today, justice is more sophisticated. To the menu of pleas have been added items like "nolo contendere," "mea culpa," and, for all I know, "amo, amas, amat"—all little trapdoors through which a defendant can escape with a minimal sentence and live forever after with his family and his conscience. Also, the "hanging judge" has been replaced by the "judge who will throw the book at you."

This kind of justice was seen in the trials of our most recent group of prison authors—Haldeman, Ehrlichman, etc. (et cetera). The process works something like this: The judge who will throw the book at you tells the defendant to approach the bench and softly asks him how long it will take him to write his book. He sentences him accordingly. Then he says, "I've always thought my life's story would make a great book.... If only I had the time to write it."

And that, sir, is a reasonable facsimile, in the classic style of a William Sydney Porter surprise finish. ◉

"What I hate most in life is those damn squirrels running across my knuckles!"

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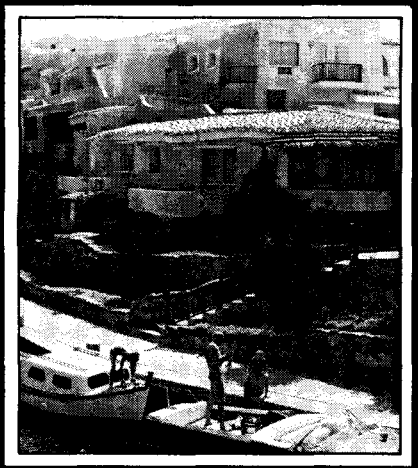

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May 27, 1978

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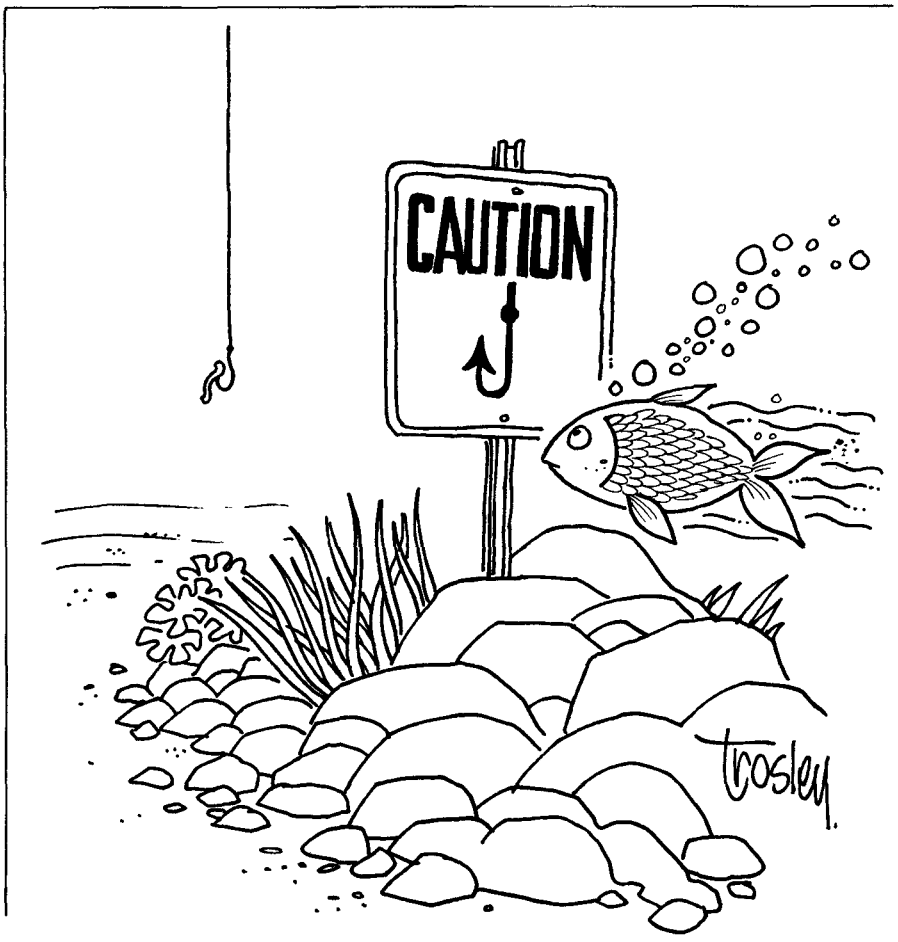

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DOUBLE-CROSTIC

Number 146

by Thomas H. Middleton

		1 C	2 F	3 K	4 I	5 R	6 O	7 G		8 N	9 M	10 Q	11 H	12 A	13 L	14 D
5 S	16 X		17 T	18 Y	19 R		20 E	21 X		22 F	23 L	24 H	25 X	26 O	27 C	
8 D	29 X	30 K		31 A	32 B	33 Y		34 V	35 G	36 M	37 H	38 C		39 Y	40 D	41 O
2 E		43 U	44 Q	45 I	46 O	47 S	48 V	49 A		50 R	51 T	52 K		53 J	54 D	55 W
	56 G	57 U	58 K	59 F	60 L	61 O		62 J	63 M	64 W		65 Y	66 J	67 I	68 D	69 F
0 P	71 V	72 O	73 N		74 A	75 P		76 G	77 V	78 L		79 W	80 J	81 M	82 Q	83 F
	84 I	85 Y		86 U	87 R	88 S		89 J	90 H	91 S	92 K	93 B		94 N	95 J	96 W
7 E	98 F		99 T	100 G	101 Q		102 S	103 U	104 M	105 O	106 V	107 P		108 J	109 W	
10 E	111 T	112 Q		113 R	114 L		115 H	116 I	117 V	118 U		119 B	120 G	121 P	122 I	123 J
24 T	125 O	126 K		127 S	128 T	129 C	130 N		131 V	132 B	133 W	134 T		135 V	136 I	137 J
38 G	139 E	140 B		141 C	142 T		143 P	144 I	145 N	146 O	147 M	148 D	149 H	150 U	151 G	
52 K	153 R	154 V	155 L		156 E	157 X	158 Q		159 J	160 C	161 K	162 W		163 B	164 Y	165 L
66 P	167 W	168 K		169 Q	170 N	171 X	172 T		173 L	174 C	175 S	176 E	177 D	178 M		

Instructions

If you've never solved one of these puzzles, it will probably look much more difficult than it actually is. If you can answer only a few of the WORDS correctly, you're on your way to solving the puzzle. Fill in the numbered blanks of all the WORDS you can guess and write the letter of each numbered blank in its correspondingly numbered square in the diagram. The letters printed in the upper-right-hand corners of the squares indicate from what WORD a particular square's letter comes.

The diagram, when filled in, should read as a quotation from a published work. The dark squares are the spaces between words. If there is no dark square at the end of a line, a word may carry over to the line below.

The first letter of each WORD, reading down, will spell the name of the author and the title of the work from which the quotation is taken.

You should find yourself seeing words and phrases taking form in the diagram; so you can work back and forth, from WORDS to diagram and from diagram to WORDS, until the diagram is filled in.

Answer to ***Double-Crostic No. 145*** appears on page 45.

CLUES	WORDS
A. Daughter of Zeus and Hera; wife of Hercules	31 49 74 12
B. Pass away silently, as time; slip by	93 119 132 163 140 32
C. Measuring worms, inchworms	129 141 160 174 1 27 38
D. Accumulation of broken ice in a river	40 148 28 54 68 177 14
E. Aggregate of minute aquatic organisms in the surface film of a body of water	20 42 97 110 139 156 176
F. "Thine only son, Isaac, whom thou ____" (Gen. 22:2)	2 22 59 69 83 98
G. Healthy nutrition	100 138 151 7 35 56 76 120
H. Swordfish	149 11 90 115 37 24
I. Capital of Kiangsi, southeast China	45 84 116 122 136 4 67 144
J. Son and successor of Saul (II Sam. 2–4)	66 89 123 95 137 159 53 80 108 62
K. "But for mine own part, it was ____," says Casca (3 wds., *Julius Caesar*)	126 152 168 3 92 30 58 161 52
L. "Old man" in England; pater	155 173 13 60 78 114 165 23
M. Fright; mess; unpleasant sight	63 178 81 104 9 36 147
N. *Seldom*	8 94 145 170 130 73
O. Cleared up, settled (2 wds.)	105 41 6 125 146 61 26 46 72
P. *Household linen*	121 143 166 107 70 75
Q. Reached to a great height, stood high	158 10 169 44 101 112 82
R. Play by James Elroy Flecker	87 153 19 50 113 5
S. City in central Sudan (2 wds.)	88 15 91 127 175 47 102
T. Cisco or lake herring	17 99 124 172 111 142 128 134 51
U. French painter (1780–1867; "Recumbent Odalisque")	118 150 43 57 103 86
V. Low-grade, machine-finished paper used in journalism	48 77 34 135 131 106 71 154 117
W. *Cartoon feature created by* humorist Roger Price	55 64 96 109 79 167 162 133
X. Daily production, yield	21 29 16 171 157 25
Y. Marine fish of the family Labridae	39 33 18 85 65 164

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THE BACK DOOR

Death on the Comeback Trail

LIKE A DOGGED POLITICIAN, capital punishment is on the comeback trail. Since the Supreme Court softened its opposition by ruling that the death penalty was not invariably unconstitutional, capital punishment has insinuated itself into headlines and election campaigns, where it often has no practical excuse for being. Despite their awareness that capital punishment would have little effect on New York City's grievous problems, last fall's mayoral candidates allowed the issue to dominate their debates and divide the electorate. A recent nationwide poll of high school seniors showed that 60 percent favor capital punishment today, as compared with 30 percent in 1971. Last month, the New York State Assembly approved a capital punishment bill by a few votes less than the two thirds necessary to override the governor's veto. Other states are moving, more or less slowly, toward reinstating the death penalty.

Why now? one can't help wondering. What in our national character is prompting us to return to capital punishment after our long abstention from it?

Viewed coolly, our opinions, whether they be for or against capital punishment, are emotional, not rational. Neither criminologists nor enlightened law enforcers can agree that the existence of capital punishment discourages capital crimes. Similarly, the economic justification for capital punishment—that by snuffing out capital criminals we save tax dollars, which we can then spend more productively—is deceptive, as the cost of maintaining capital criminals represents a negligible fraction of any community's budget. Finally, the facts do not support the familiar argument that an unlucky innocent may fall victim to trumped-up evidence or to a vindictive jury. If a man today is executed for a crime by the state, the likelihood is as close to a certainty as possible that the man committed the crime.

Pro and con arguments such as these attempt to justify rationally an emotional inclination. Capital punishment is our only purely, unmistakably life-and-death political question, and it unnerves us. Most humane persons would prefer to take their stand on the basis of facts rather than feelings.

In an era of national unanimity, the issue of capital punishment would provoke less anxiety. When a nation is wholeheartedly committing young lives to a cause, for instance, one finds less disagreement about how to treat traitors to that cause. If one soldier's betrayal results in the unnecessary massacre of a battalion, even voices that would urge clemency tend not to speak up lest they be suspected of traitorous sympathies.

Ours is not an era of unanimity. Since 1945, Americans have lacked a unifying cause. There have been causes—anticommunism, civil rights, the Asian wars, and Watergate—but they united one segment of the population against another. For a brief, exhilarating moment, we felt unified in our race to the moon. But except for that and for a few eruptions of national grief, at the deaths of the Kennedy brothers, for example, we have felt almost no national unanimity about anything.

Lacking an exterior evil to mobilize against, we became introspective. The closer we looked, the more the certainties of an earlier generation shrank into questionable propositions in the postwar years. The prosperity, military power, and technological prowess in which we had once taken pride came to seem mixed blessings, at best. We began to notice the inequities and limitations of our style of governing and to feel more curious about and sympathetic toward alternative goals and styles. For the first time in American history, we began to sympathize with the impulses that turned men to crime, and to question the punishments meted out for those crimes. The deaths of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in particular undermined our confidence in our system of justice and in the propriety of the death penalty. As Mme. de Staël wrote, "To understand all is to pardon all." The more we understood about ourselves, the more urgently we asked were we certain enough about what was right and wrong to end a life on the basis of those convictions.

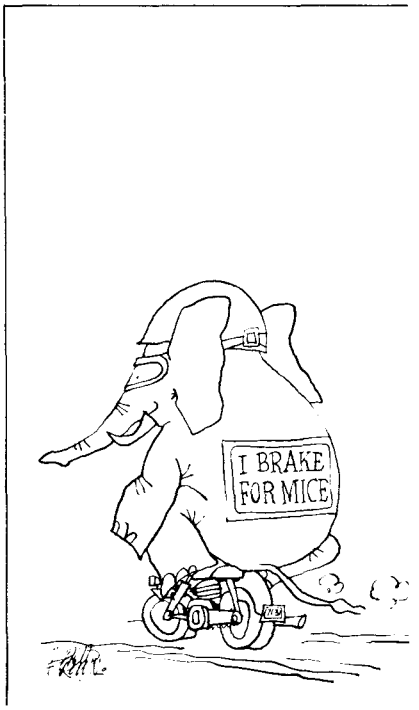
Those who were uncertain joined with those who held a different certainty—that the taking of a life by the state, under any circumstances, is wrong—to create an effectual consensus. For seven years, until the gruesome Gary Gilmore parlayed his death throes into a million dollar legacy ar lasting fame, there were no legal exec tions in America. If the present tren continue, executions by the state w become less uncommon occurrences.

One can debate forever the morali of the death penalty. There are san sensitive persons who argue that th death penalty is a barbarous instru ment and that its use indicates a lack c respect for life. There are others, n less sane or sensitive, who argue tha not having a death penalty debases th value of life (for, after all, what greate price can one assess for a life than life?). Because I cannot conceive of legal system that would not permit a Adolf Hitler to be put to death, I favc the latter argument.

But the sad fact is that the issue wi not be decided on the basis of moral c logical arguments. The nation is retur ing to capital punishment because it fed up with the complexities of libera ism, fed up with rising crime rates an an ineffective judicial system. Eve though capital punishment doe nothing to solve these problems, sup porting capital punishment is a way c stomping one's foot on the ground an saying, "Enough! I will not tolerate an more."

Death is definitive.

—CARLL TUCKI



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